

ANTON SIMEONOVITCH  
MAKARENKO



Anton Simonovitch Makarenko

[Front.]

ANTON SIMEONOVITCH  
MAKARENKO

Russian Teacher

by  
W. L. GOODMAN

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## INTRODUCTION

THE original intention in writing this book, or rather, in compiling it, for in it Makarenko has been allowed very largely to tell his own story in his own words, was to make available to English readers an account of how the problem of the "bisprizornie" or homeless, vagabond, and delinquent children was dealt with in Russia after the First World War, the Revolution, and the famine.

There is no need to point out how topical this question is in our own country to-day. We have had and are still having our own difficulties with juvenile delinquents of one sort and another, not perhaps on the same lines as the Russians, and fortunately not on the same scale, but the problem is still a very pressing and urgent one. It should certainly be of interest, and very likely of value, to indicate how the Russians dealt with it, as far as the limited material available in this country allows. As Sir Robert Mayer says in his little book on this topic entitled *Young People in Trouble*, which was published recently:

"One remembers those gangs of homeless children who lived outlaw lives in the cities of Russia in the first years of the revolution. The task of fitting them into the new society that was emerging was accomplished with brilliant success. Yet the story of how it was done has still to be made available to other countries."

Makarenko was one of the teachers who had a share in this success, and this book is an attempt to indicate some of the methods, and an outline of what has since come to be known as the "Makarenko system", which he adopted to achieve his aim of re-educating the delinquents placed in his care.

In his own country, however, Makarenko is honoured not so much for his work with the "bisprizornie" as for his contributions to general educational theory and practice. His name

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is often linked with those of Ushinski, Leo Tolstoy, Krupskaya, and other leaders of Russian educational thought. In an address on "The Laws, Principles, and Rules of Education", given to a session of the Soviet Academy of Educational Science on 12th September, 1945, P. N. Guzdieff, a member of the Academy, said of him:

"Soviet education has enriched the science of pedagogy with many new laws, principles, and rules. One of the greatest innovators in educational science was A. S. Makarenko.

"Makarenko worked out a whole series of new principles in education, and disclosed the essential laws which bound them together. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Academician Guzdieff goes on to point out in detail the theoretical foundations of Makarenko's work, and remarks further:

"We have schools and teachers whose work must be studied as Makarenko studied his own rich and varied experience, and as Stanislavski studied the art of the actor. Both men, the one in the province of education and the other in art, tried to penetrate to the true inwardness of the activity to which they had devoted their lives. . . . Both men turned their art into a science, and this in turn deepened its value as an art."

The study of his methods, however, would be meaningless without some indication, at least in outline, of the prevailing conditions under which he worked. The following pages will give some idea of how difficult those conditions were, and of how Makarenko eventually overcame the physical poverty of his surroundings, the ignorance and hooliganism of his charges, and last, but not least, the opposition of his superiors.

A common criticism of the Soviet system is that it means a cast-iron dictatorship over opinion. This view rather amuses the average Russian, with memories of life under the Tsars, but there is enough truth in it to make some of us doubt the value of other and more positive aspects of the régime. One of

<sup>1</sup>*Soviet Pedagogics*, No. 4-5, 1946.



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the most interesting features of Makarenko's story is his struggle with the authorities to get his ideas accepted. Many of these ideas, on discipline, for instance, and on punishments and rewards, were directly opposed to those of his immediate superiors, not only in practice but in theory, but instead of being suppressed out of hand, as we are told to expect, Makarenko succeeded in a large measure in establishing the correctness of his views, and in Russia itself his name, in educational circles at any rate, is now a household word. So that it seems that it is possible, even under a cast-iron dictatorship, to criticize the accepted doctrines and get away with it.

What saved Makarenko here, to my mind, was not so much his wide learning, his experience, and the insight which he brought to bear on his problems, great as these were, as the reader will no doubt see for himself, but his peculiar, not to say almost English, sense of humour. The man with a sense of humour properly developed can never be a party fanatic himself, and this very quality is his main defence against their attacks. Makarenko was a great teacher because he possessed that faculty which is indispensable to any teacher, the capacity to see the funny side of things, even teaching.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My thanks are due to Academician E. N. Medynski for permission to quote from his book on A. S. Makarenko for the biographical material in Chapter I, and to Mrs. Makarenko and "Mezhdunarodnaya Kniga" for the extracts from *Sovietskaya Pedagogika*. I am also deeply grateful for the valuable help afforded me by Miss Judith Todd and Miss Dorothy Orgler, of the Society for Cultural Relations with the U.S.S.R., in putting their files of Soviet publications at my disposal. The translations throughout are my own, in fact most of them were done before I knew that Stephen Garry had already issued his translation of the first part of the *Poem of Education* under the title of *The Way to Life*; but I strongly recommend anybody who can to get hold of this book, for it is only possible to appreciate fully Makarenko's attitude to his problems by reading his own account. It is to be hoped that sooner or later the whole book will become available to English readers.

W.L.G.



## CHAPTER I

### TRAINING AND EARLY TEACHING EXPERIENCE

ANTON SIMEONOVITCH MAKARENKO was born on 1st (13th) March, 1888, in Bielopole, a small town near the north-east boundary of the Ukraine, about a hundred miles north of Kharkov. Owing, perhaps, to the warmer climate, at any rate in the summer, the people of the Ukraine have the reputation of being much gayer and as a rule more easy-going than their fellow Slavs of the north and east, in White Russia and Russia proper. Generally speaking life is a good deal easier there than in the forest lands of the north. Large areas of the Ukraine consist of the famous "black-earth" soil, and before the war the province was the main granary of the U.S.S.R., besides growing nearly three-quarters of the sugar-beet crops of the Union. The orchards of the Ukraine are also famous for their apples, plums, and cherries, and in the south, near the Black Sea, grapes of a high quality are cultivated on a large scale. The Ukrainians have their own language, which is related to Russian in a similar way as Portuguese is to Spanish. Under the Tsarist régime the native language and culture were ruthlessly suppressed, but they have had a vigorous revival under the Soviet policy of encouraging regional art and cultures. Makarenko—names ending in -enko appear to be very common in the province—probably owed his keen sense of humour and zest for life to his Ukrainian parentage and environment.

His father, Simeon Grigorievitch Makarenko, was a foreman in the paint shop of the railway works at Bielopole, but the family were never particularly well off. When he was twelve his father's workshop was moved to Kriukoff, near Kremenchug, almost in the middle of the Ukraine, about 120 miles down the Dneiper from Kiev, and Anton attended the four-class school

in the town. This appears to have been a kind of secondary or grammar school, as it was attended by the children of minor officials and tradesmen. Makarenko recalls that when he was taking him to the school, his father said to him:

"This town school wasn't built for the likes of us, but you show them. . . . If you come home with a four . . . you'd better not come home at all. . . . Understand?"

Anton carried out his father's orders to the letter. During the whole of his time at the school, and later at the Teachers' Training College, he never received a lower mark than a five. The Russian schools of that period had a universal system of marking by numbers, from five downwards, roughly corresponding to our excellent, very good, good, fair, and poor. This "five-point" system was abolished after the revolution, and was replaced by the so-called "socialist rivalry" system, under which individual work was more or less disregarded, the progress of the class or group as a whole being taken as the criterion of success. Recently, however (1943), the five-point system was reintroduced, together with the award of gold and silver medals for outstanding pupils in the "middle" (secondary) schools and colleges, which had been dropped at the same time.

After the local school Makarenko went through a short course as a pupil teacher and in 1903 was appointed as an assistant in the two-class school attached to the factory where his father worked. The two-class primary school, according to Professor Medynski, had at that time a five-year course: three years in the first class (corresponding to our junior school), and a two-year period in the top class. Makarenko was almost immediately promoted to take the top class, an unusual distinction for a young pupil teacher, and it is clear that he had already shown some signs of that ability which his later successes brilliantly confirmed. Professor Medynski remarks of this school:

"The railway primary schools, and particularly the higher

two-class schools, were at that time a good deal better than the usual run of primary schools, and being adequately financed by the railway authorities, they were as a rule well built and properly equipped. In many of them, besides the usual general subjects (the three R's) various handicrafts were taught, such as carpentry, metalwork, and turning. The teachers were paid better and the staffing was usually on a more generous scale than in the other primary schools."

It may sound strange to us to talk of "railway schools", but perhaps there is as good a reason for the railway authorities running the schools as, for example, the Church. In reply to a series of questions on this point, Professor Medynski has since informed me that most of the railways were at that time under State control, and although they provided the buildings and finance, the administration was under the local authorities. The pupils were the children of the factory workers and railway servants, and Makarenko, in his article "Gorki and My Life" (1936), wrote of this period:

"In the railway school where I taught at this time the air was incomparably clearer than in other places; the workers, a real proletarian group, had the control of the school firmly in their hands. A good many Bolsheviks came from this school. . . ."

At this time the work of Maxim Gorki had a great influence over Makarenko, as, indeed, it had over many of the younger generation in those difficult early years of the century, and this influence, as we shall see later, lasted all his life and played an important part in the development of his educational theory and practice. He expressed his own indebtedness to Gorki as a young teacher in the following words:

"Both for me and for my pupils Maxim Gorki was the great expounder of the Marxian point of view. Even if our appreciation of history came from other sources, by way of Bolshevik propaganda and revolutionary events, or by way of our own social and economic environment and tendencies, it was Gorki

who taught us to feel them as history, who confirmed our passion and hatred, and who made us cry, with even greater confidence and fervour: 'Let the storm blow louder!' "<sup>1</sup>

Under Makarenko's direction school outings and week-end camps were organized for the children, and this work brought the young teacher into still closer contact with the parents of his scholars. Later he organized a kind of Parent-Teacher Association among the leading workers. But in addition to the work of this association, the parents met in the school for the purpose of organizing revolutionary activities, and the headmaster, Mikhail Grigorievitch Kompantseff, together with other members of the staff, including most probably Makarenko himself, took an active part in these meetings. In fact the Kriukoff railway school, like many other schools of the same type up and down the land, was the focal point of revolutionary activity in the district.

These activities became in time so obnoxious to the authorities that Mikhail Kompantseff was transferred to another school, and another head, of a more "suitable" type, was appointed in his place. The new head soon showed himself to be corrupt, while Makarenko was at loggerheads with him almost from the start. With the support of the authorities, the new head brought an action for slander against Makarenko, but when the action came up for trial Makarenko was able to produce clear evidence of the headmaster's corruption, and he was finally removed to another school. Soon after, in 1911, Makarenko himself succeeded in obtaining a transfer to the railway school at Dolin station in the province of Kherson, near the mouth of the Dneiper about fifty miles east of Odessa, where he rejoined his old friend and headmaster Kompantseff. Three years later, at the age of twenty-six, he entered the Poltava Teachers' Institute,

<sup>1</sup>This is a quotation from Gorki's famous poem "The Stormy Petrel", which was written about this time (1907), and became a rallying cry for the revolutionary groups. The expression "the Storm" was later common among the bolsheviks to denote the revolution itself; cf. Ivan Maisky's fascinating autobiography entitled *Before the Storm*, which treats of the same period.



where he took a course preparing teachers for the headship of the higher primary schools.

At the Poltava Institute he was one of the best students of his year. The former director of the college, A. K. Volnin, wrote of him:

"A. S. Makarenko was always one of the most active speakers in the educational seminars and discussions. His contributions to the debates were distinguished not only by the soundness and logic of their matter, but also by the elegance of their form. Makarenko was a complete master of the spoken word, and what was particularly striking in a Ukrainian, he showed himself a fluent and vigorous exponent of the purest literary Russian. This was his particular gift. He would lecture for two or three hours at a stretch in the most perfect Russian, and every now and then interpolate one of his Ukrainian idiomatic expressions with all their perky native humour, and thus keep his audience at the highest pitch of attention throughout."

Apart from his studies in the theory and practice of education Makarenko was particularly keen on history, an interest which he retained throughout his life. He completed his course with distinction and was awarded the gold medal for his year. The testimonial which he received on leaving reads:

"Makarenko, Anton . . . an outstanding pupil, equally for his skill, knowledge, development and industry; his particular interests lie in the direction of educational theory and the humanities, in which he is widely read and on which he has submitted some brilliant theses. He should be an excellent teacher in all subjects, but particularly history and the Russian language."

After leaving the College Makarenko returned to Kriukoff, where his recently widowed mother was still living, and on 1st September, 1917, he was appointed headmaster of the higher primary school there. Shortly after this the October Revolution broke out, and Makarenko, in common with other forward-looking teachers, greeted this event with enthusiasm. Later he wrote:

"After October we could all see a broad perspective opening out before us. We teachers were so intoxicated by the prospect that we hardly knew what to do with ourselves."

In his new school Makarenko organized a brass band and started a school garden, besides introducing a wide range of out-of-school activities. I. Gukoff, a colleague of Makarenko's and head of a neighbouring school, relates in his reminiscences that Makarenko was already engaged at this time in the search for new forms and methods in teaching work. Gukoff recalls that right from the beginning Makarenko made a strong point of military drill and symbols, flags, drums, distinguishing badges for the pupils, and a firm discipline.

This was an extremely bold line to take in those days, as the prevailing school of educational thought at that time, in Russia at any rate, was strongly in favour of what was called "free" education and opposed to any kind of discipline, especially anything smacking of militarism. Gukoff describes how Makarenko organized the work of his pupils in the school garden, which in itself was an innovation for its time. The entire school was divided into groups, each with its own distinguishing badge, a white armlet with a device worked on it in the form of a cherry, a carrot, or an apple, according to the species of plant or tree the group happened to be working on at the time. The children would be assembled in the school hall, the flag would be unfurled, Makarenko took command, and the column, with drums beating and banners waving would march to the scene of their labours. Before starting work Makarenko would make a short speech and then each group would proceed to its allotted task.

It is not difficult to see in these tentative gropings towards a new method the germs of the complicated system which Makarenko developed later in the Gorki and Dzerzhinski communes. It was a time of drastic change, and experiment was in the air. All traditions, whether good or bad, were liable to be thrown into the melting-pot, and although much that had been

evil was eliminated, many of the good things had to go as well. It is one of Makarenko's great virtues that though he confessed that he was as intoxicated as anyone else by the visions of the future, he never quite lost his head to the extent that others did. His native Ukrainian sense of ironic humour, allied to his Russian realism, helped in a large measure to keep his feet firm on the ground.

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## CHAPTER II

### THE GORKI COLONY

IN September, 1920, Makarenko was summoned to the office of the chief of the Poltava District Education Authority. His interview with this gentleman is described in the first chapter of his *Poem of Education* with his usual vigour:

"‘Listen, old man. I hear that you have been complaining rather a lot . . . about your school . . . they gave it to you all to yourself . . . the district Education Authority. . . .’

"‘Complaining? So would you complain, if you had to work there. You would do more than complain, you’d howl the place down. What sort of a school do you call it? It’s full of smoke, and dirty . . .’

"‘There you go . . . that’s just what I expected you would say; give us new buildings, give us a new organization, then we can do something. But the question, my dear chap, is not one of new buildings, the problem in front of us now is that of creating the new man. But you teachers, you sabotage everything; the buildings are all wrong, the desks aren’t suitable, and this, and that. . . . You don’t seem to possess that fire—that revolutionary fire—you teachers. You and the braid on your trousers!’

"‘There’s no braid on mine at the moment.’

"‘So? There’s no braid on your trousers? Scruffy intellectuals, eh? . . . But this is an important matter. These children, they’re nothing but vagabonds—you can’t walk along the street, and they break into people’s houses. They say to me, this is your job, you’re chief of the Education Authority. Well?’

"‘What do you mean, well?’

"‘I mean this. Whoever I ask, nobody wants the job, they

say they might get their throats cut. Now you are a studious, bookish sort of chap. You wear glasses.'

"I smiled.

"I'm only saying, you read all about it, you read everything, but as soon as you come up against the real thing, you are all alike, the real thing beats you. You intelligentsia!"

"The chief education officer lowered his little black eyes in my direction, and from under his bushy whiskers hurled reproaches at the entire teaching profession. But he was wrong, however, this chief officer.

"'But listen a moment,'

"'What do you mean, listen? What can you possibly say in answer to that? You would say, like they all say: "now if only this were America"! Not long ago I read a big book on this very thing. What was it they called them? Reformatories? No, that's not it . . . Ah! . . . Reformatioriums . . . That's it. But we haven't got anything like that here.'

"'No, but listen to me.'

"'All right, I'm listening.'

"'They managed to deal with these vagabonds before the revolution. They had colonies of juvenile delinquents.'

"'But that's not quite the sort of thing.'

"'True. The fact is, we have to make a new man in a new way.'

"'In a new way. That is so.'

"'And nobody knows how to do it.'

"'No. Do you?'

"'No.'

"'That's what they all say. But there are one or two in this office who think they know.'

"'But they don't want to take the job on.'

"'No, they don't, the scum! You're right there.'

"'And if I took it on, they would be after me with lighted candles. Whatever I did, they would say it was wrong.'

"'That's true.'

"‘And you would support them.’"

"‘No! I should tell them: why didn’t you take it on?’"

"‘But suppose I make a mess of it?’"

"‘There you go! “Make a mess of it.” All right, you make one or two mistakes. What sort of a chap do you take me for? Don’t you realize that I should understand? You make a few mistakes, but at the same time we are getting on with the job. The important thing is, we don’t want just another home for juvenile delinquents like the old ones, but, if you understand me, some kind of socialist education. We need people like that—our own people. And you can do it. After all, you can pick it up as you go along. I’m glad you said you didn’t know, straight out, like that. I liked that. . . .’"<sup>1</sup>

This appointment of Makarenko was part of a determined effort by the revolutionary government to deal with the thousands of "bisprizornie", or homeless and vagabond children; a legacy of three years of unsuccessful war, the revolution itself, the Allied interventions and the famine, which between them had completed the economic and social disintegration of Tsarist Russia. A year earlier, at the first All-Russian "Save the Children" conference in Moscow, the party leaders and educational workers had agreed that this was a national problem and should be tackled by the full employment of government resources and the active collaboration of the Soviet community. It was decided that the older children especially "should be directed into healthy productive activities, and the most suitable forms of such work must be found, so that the children can be earning and learning at the same time".<sup>2</sup> Makarenko's task was to find out whether this re-education could be organized on the basis of work on the farm.

The site chosen for the experiment was a piece of land about six kilometres from Poltava, between the pine woods and the

<sup>1</sup>A. S. Makarenko, *Poem of Education*, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>A. M. Philippov, "The Care of Orphans in the Ukraine", *The New Era*, May, 1947.

main road to Kharkov. The property consisted of about a hundred acres of land and several half-demolished barrack-like buildings, which before the revolution had accommodated a colony of juvenile delinquents. The buildings themselves were in a terribly dilapidated state; after the colony had dispersed, the neighbouring peasants had appropriated all the doors, windows, and fireplaces, and had even dug up the fruit trees in the orchard. After two months of intense work the home was brought into some semblance of order; one of the larger buildings was arranged as a combined living-room, dining-room, and dormitory, heated by two patent wood-burning stoves, while two or three smaller rooms were partitioned off to serve as living-quarters for the staff. This at first consisted of Makarenko himself, Kalina Ivannitch Serduki, an old cavalry trooper who acted as overseer, and two female teachers, Yekaterina Grigorievna and Lydia Petrovna.

Kalina Ivannitch figures in a good many of the earlier episodes in the *Poem*, and although Makarenko usually describes the part he played in them in a semi-humorous, ironical manner, it is clear that he found him a man after his own heart. Apart from his dealings with horses during his service with the Guards regiment, Kalina Ivannitch had had no experience whatever of farm work, and his general outlook was a curious mixture of old-fashioned prejudices with flashes of acute common sense, but his loyalty to the colony and to the best interests of the children made him an invaluable partner to his chief. He was nominally in charge of the farm work itself, besides acting as general factotum with regard to stores, food, clothing, and so on, but as the colony grew the agricultural work was taken out of his hands by the appointment of a properly trained instructor-supervisor, or "agronom", as the Russians call them, while his other functions were in course of time handled by prefects chosen from among the older colonists, so that finally he reverted to the not uncongenial role of general adviser and elder statesman.

Makarenko had considerable difficulty in getting teachers to volunteer for the new colony, but after several meetings of the Teachers' Union in the local villages he managed to enlist the help of two young women, Yekaterina Grigorievna and Lydia Petrovna.<sup>1</sup> Lidochka, as he usually called the latter, was a young girl fresh from high school, and her chief asset in Makarenko's eyes was that she had everything to learn. Yekaterina Grigorievna, on the other hand, although not much older in years, was a good deal tougher—he describes her as “a stout pedagogical wolf”—and besides her training as a teacher, she had had some experience of hospital work, which came in extremely useful later on.

In December the first six pupils arrived. To Makarenko's surprise, they were not “bisprizornie” at all, but well-dressed and apparently well-brought-up lads from the neighbouring towns and villages. Four of them were about eighteen years old, and had been ordered to the colony by the magistrates for taking part in armed robbery, while the other two were rather younger, and had been picked up by the police for petty theft. A ceremonial dinner was arranged to celebrate their arrival, and afterwards Makarenko made a short speech, in which he appealed to the lads to forget the past, and help him and the rest of the staff to lead them to a new life. During his address there was a good deal of whispering and fidgeting, and he heard one youth say to another:

“It was all your fault we were sent to this academy.”

From the first day they simply ignored the staff, lounged about all day between meals and disappeared at nightfall, and one week later the police came down and arrested one of them for murder. There were constant complaints from the surrounding villages about hold-ups on the main road, and Makarenko was forced to ask the Ministry for permission to carry a revolver, but concealed from the authorities the real state of affairs in the

<sup>1</sup>This use of the Christian name and patronymic is equivalent to our saying “Miss So-and-so”. The names are, of course, fictitious throughout.



colony. He was not without hope he might find some means of influencing the lads for good, but for a time it was hard going.

"For me and for my assistants the first few months in the colony were not only months of despair and fruitless effort, they were also months devoted to an earnest search for truth. Never in all my life have I read so many educational books as I did in that winter of 1920.

"This was the time of the Wrangel intervention and the Polish war. Wrangel and his army had been quite near us, just below Novimirgorod, and not far away, near Cherkassy, the Poles were still fighting. But in the forest, hiding our heads in our hands, we tried to forget the terrible things going on all round us, and went on reading educational literature. . . .

"For me the chief result of all this study was the sudden conviction that I had no science or theory to work from, and that bookish formulæ were not a scrap of good to me, and that the only thing I could do was to bring to the work all my powers of analysis and gradually feel my way forward."<sup>1</sup>

One day, after some trouble about cutting firewood, Makarenko lost his temper completely and struck one of the lads. This incident, which will be discussed more fully in a later chapter, was always referred to afterwards as "the punch on the jaw", and seemed to mark a turning-point in his relations with his pupils. Makarenko was by no means ashamed of his lapse, and although his assistants pulled his leg unmercifully about it, he stuck to his guns, and by firm control, and above all, by a ceaseless concern for the improvement of the living conditions in the colony, he managed at length to get some of them to co-operate.

His account of his efforts to obtain better food and clothing for his pupils gives us some very interesting information about the way things were run in the early days of the revolution. There was, of course, a good deal of improvisation, and Makarenko was by no means averse to dodging a column or two in

<sup>1</sup>*Poem*, p. 25.

order to obtain what he wanted, or what he thought was the children's due.

"The atmosphere of the Education Authority at this time was not much help to us in our struggles for improvement. At that period the District Education Office was housed in a conglomeration of rooms and ante-rooms, and was usually crowded with people, but the real reflection of the education authority there was not the people, but the tables. Rickety and worn-out; some of them writing-tables, some dressing-tables, some card-tables; sometimes red, sometimes black, surrounded by chairs of a similar variety; these tables corresponded to the different sections of the authority, which were denoted by cards affixed to the wall behind them. Most of the time the great majority of these tables were unoccupied, for the presiding dignity usually combined in his own person not merely the management of his own section, but also the post of clerk in another department. If by any chance the figure of a man or woman appeared at one of the tables, there was a rush of applicants from all sides of the room. The conversation then took the form of revealing which department this particular person represented; that the applicant would no doubt have to address himself to another section; if so, where that section was; and if not that one it must be the table where Comrade So-and-so sat last Friday; wouldn't that be the one? At this point the departmental head would weigh his anchor and disappear. . . .

"Our food consisted mostly of 'kondyor'.<sup>1</sup> No doubt this is a regular Russian dish, so I will desist from further comment. Other kinds of food appeared at rare intervals. At this time there were various rationing standards: the normal ration, the augmented ration; rations for the weak and the strong; rations for defectives, inmates of sanatoria, and hospital rations. Sometimes, by means of careful diplomacy, we would be placed, for example, on the hospital standard, which meant that we were entitled to milk, a quantity of fats, and white bread. It was not

<sup>1</sup>Tinned meat.

often we actually got these things, but for a time we had rather less 'kondyor'. . . . Sometimes we were able to exert sufficient pressure to get butter, smoked herrings, and sweets, but to our lasting chagrin it was discovered that we, as moral defectives, had no right to these luxuries, which were reserved entirely for the mental defectives.

"Sometimes we succeeded in breaking out of the educational sphere altogether into some neighbouring department such as, for example, the District Produce Commissariat or the Supply Department of a similar organization. The education authorities, of course, expressly forbade such partisanship, so it was necessary to do this under cover.

"For the breaching of these fortresses one had to arm oneself with a form, on which would be written the single phrase: 'The — colony of juvenile delinquents requests the supply of 100 poods<sup>1</sup> of flour for feeding the pupils.' In the colony itself we never used the word delinquents, and our institution had never been called that; the phrase in common use was 'moral defectives'. But for the outside world this latter designation was of little value, it smelt far too strongly of education.

"The managers of the supply organizations, however, were not always very well acquainted with the subtleties of educational nomenclature, and it didn't often occur to them that 'juvenile delinquents' had anything to do with schools. The emotional colouring of the phrase 'juvenile delinquents' was too suggestive. So it was rare for the official to turn to me and say:

" 'What are you doing here? Go to your education offices.' Usually it went something like this. The manager would ponder a little and say:

" 'Who supplies you? The prison people?'

" 'No. You see, the prison people don't supply us, because the children . . .'

" 'But who does supply you, then?'

<sup>1</sup>About 32 cwt.

"Well, up to now, it hasn't been very clear who . . ."

"What do you mean—"not very clear"? Sounds funny . . ."

"The official would write a short note on his memo pad and ask us to call again in a week's time.

"In that case let me have, say, twenty poods."

"Impossible. But I'll give you five now, and find out about the other later. Come and see me in a week's time."

"Five poods was little enough, but our need was so great that it was out of the question to prolong the discussion too much. We couldn't wait for things to be 'found out'."

"It was a great day for the colony when the officials, without asking any questions at all, took our form and wrote across one corner: 'Supply'. Then I would rush madly back to the colony:

"Kalina Ivannitch! . . . An order! . . . An order! . . . A hundred poods! . . . Get a couple of the lads and harness up as soon as you can!"

"What did you say? A hundred poods? Who from?"

"Can't you see? Look—the District Produce Commissariat of the Department of Justice."

"Who thought of them? Never mind, it's all the same to us. Ha-ha!"<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes the colonists themselves took a hand in relieving the monotony of their diet by fishing in the adjoining river Kolomak. The local peasants used a square pyramidal net called the "yatera", which appears from Makarenko's description to be very similar to that used a good deal in Brittany and known as "au carrelet". One of the older boys, Taranetz, "found" one of these nets, and as Makarenko was sitting in his room one evening, he came in rather timidly and laid a plate of fried fish on the table:

"Here's some fish for you."

Makarenko was rather surprised at this, for up to then the catch had always found its way to a small and select clique of colonists. He decided, however, to take advantage of his

<sup>1</sup>*Poem*, p. 21.

admission into the charmed circle by introducing the idea of co-operation to the fishermen, and said:

"So I see. But I don't want it, thank you."

"Why?"

"Because it's not right. You ought to give the fish to the whole colony."

"Tarantetz blushed with annoyance. 'Why?' he said. 'I put the net out and caught the fish. I got my feet wet, and now I have to give them to everybody?'"

"Then take your fish away. I didn't put the net out or catch anything or get my feet wet."

"But we're giving it you."

"I shan't take it, because it's not right."

"Why isn't it right?"

"Because you didn't buy the net. It was given you."

"Yes."

"To you only, or to the whole colony?"

"What do you mean—"to the whole colony"? It was given to me."

"Oh! I thought it was given to all of us. But whose frying-pan did you use? Yours? No, you used our frying-pan. And the fat you begged from the cook. Whose fat was that? Yours? No, it belonged to everybody. And the firewood and the stove and the dish. A poor idea . . . *your* net. In future you catch the fish for us all, or I shall confiscate the net. And you must all take turns with the fishing."

"All right," said Tarantetz, "just as you say. But for all that, you might as well have the fish."

"I took the fish, but from that time on the fishing was done in turn and the catch turned over to the kitchen."<sup>1</sup>

The lads also had other sources of supply. Almost every day Kalina Ivannitch harnessed up the old mare and went up to town for stores of one kind and another, and he was invariably accompanied by one or more colonists with a more or less valid

<sup>1</sup>*Poem*, p. 25.

excuse for a trip to town. On their return they usually had a self-satisfied, well-fed appearance, and as often as not brought one or two presents for their less fortunate comrades. "The results of these expeditions always had a perfectly legal explanation. 'Auntie gave it me' or 'I met somebody I know'. I tried not to appear too sceptical, and besides, what was the point of seeming to disbelieve them? To me the hungry, ragged colonists were particularly unsuitable objectives for moral disquisitions for the sake of a few trifles like a pocketful of cakes or a new pair of boot-soles."<sup>1</sup>

A month or two later a further dozen or so fresh colonists arrived. These were real "bisprizornie", and Makarenko had great difficulty in getting them washed, clothed, and free from the various skin affections they brought with them. The main problem in the early days was the constant thieving that went on, both inside and outside the colony, chiefly, of course, food and articles of clothing. On one occasion a month's supply of lard, "which we treasured like bullion", together with several pounds of sweets that were being saved for a May-day party, were stolen from the pantry. After considerable effort a further supply of these delicacies was obtained from the authorities, and after supper that evening Makarenko showed it to the assembled lads, made a short speech indicating that this was the last they were likely to get, and locked it up in the cellar. The next morning it had vanished. Makarenko was glad in a way, but in spite of his attempts to persuade them that they were stealing their own property, he was exasperated to find that the lads as a whole took a purely sporting view of the thefts; they were much more concerned with who had taken the stuff and how cleverly it had been done, than the fact that it was their own food that was being stolen. In his attitude to this problem, which loomed very large in the early days of the colony, Makarenko realized that he was up against something not so much due to the low moral standards of his pupils, as to the low

<sup>1</sup>*Poem*, p. 26.

standards of their physical environment. When, after one particularly virulent outbreak of thieving, the culprit was eventually found, he arranged a People's Court, composed of the colonists themselves, to try the offender, with himself in the role of prosecuting counsel. This gave the lads some sense of their public responsibility, but even this was of little practical value without a considerable improvement in their living conditions, and the proper organization of the school and farm in such a way that the lads would look after their possessions because they had created them with their own hands.

During the first winter the work of the lads was concerned chiefly with repairing the buildings and making them habitable for the constant influx of new pupils, and making implements for use later on the farm. Some old woodwork benches had been found in a neglected barn, tools were obtained, and a joiner's shop, smithy, and wheelwright's shop were fitted up with local carpenters and a blacksmith as instructors. One of the first things they made was a crude plough, and in April Kalina Ivannitch began ploughing, and later sowed a few acres of oats.

Apart from his constant anxiety over their food and living conditions, Makarenko also managed to find something to occupy his pupils by organizing a daily patrol over the main road adjacent to the colony. The ostensible purpose of this patrol was to guard the return of Kalina Ivannitch with his stores from town, but as a rule nothing happened except a certain amount of horse-play on the part of the lads. On one occasion, however, they succeeded in capturing a man who was subsequently identified by the authorities as a well-known bandit, and the whole gang was later brought to justice as a result of this one capture. For their part in this the colony was publicly thanked by the District Police Commissar. Later they were asked to keep a look-out for timber stealers in the adjoining Government forest, and several times they caught the local peasants poaching firewood. Another exploit which attracted the lads and gained

for them a certain amount of credit among the surrounding villagers was a campaign against vodka distilling in the local farms. The right to distil their own spirits had been allowed to the Ukrainian farmers for centuries<sup>1</sup>—in the rest of Russia the liquor trade had always been a State monopoly—but owing to the scarcity of grain it had been forbidden by the Soviet authorities. Of these activities Makarenko characteristically remarked:

"It was not so much the moral side of all this which laid the foundations upon which the healthy tone of the community was built. What actually happened was that in the evenings we laughed and argued and quarrelled about our interesting adventures of the day, and built up our fantasies on the theme of the future, and were gradually welded together into a single unit, the Gorki colony."<sup>2</sup>

About this time Makarenko more or less by accident found another outside interest which was to keep him and his pupils busy for the next two years and more. Half-way through the winter they were allotted some firewood which they undertook to fetch themselves from the woods on the other side of the Kolomak river back to the colony. On this expedition, they came across a dilapidated manor house which before the revolution had belonged to some local landed gentry named Trepke. Part of the settlement was still inhabited by some peasants who worked the mill, but most of the buildings, including the manor house itself, the stables, outhouses, barns and byres, although obviously well and strongly built, would soon fall to rack and ruin, and practically all the woodwork of the doors and windows had been torn out for firewood. But what attracted Makarenko, in spite of their terrible state, was the variety and suitability of the buildings for the purposes of a working colony, and after some discussion in the colony it was decided to apply to the relevant authority for permission to take over the property. Makarenko succeeded in gaining the ear of one of the leading

<sup>1</sup>B. H. Sumner, *Survey of Russian History* (Duckworth), p. 45.

<sup>2</sup>*Poem*, p. 40.



members of the Provincial Executive Committee,<sup>1</sup> pointing out that owing to its sandy soil the original colony would never be much use for agricultural work, while Trepke was in an ideal position close to the river, besides being composed for the most part of the real "black-earth" soil. A week or so later he returned to the colony with an order for possession of the estate in his pocket, together with about 150 acres of land, and the promise of funds for repairs. He describes the scene in these words:

"I stood in the middle of the dormitory that night and could scarcely believe myself that it was not a dream, while a crowd of excited lads milled round me, shouting with glee and stretching out their hands:

"'Give it me . . . give it me and let me see it! . . .'

"Kalina Ivannitch was as happy as anyone.

"'What a lad you are! Like the old priests used to say: ask, and you shall receive; shove, and it will be opened, and you get it . . .'

"'In the neck,' interrupted Zadoroff.

"'What do you mean—"in the neck"? There's the order.'

"'You "shoved" for the cistern, but you got it in the neck.'

"'You are too young to understand the Scriptures, my boy.'

The allusion was to a large iron cistern which Kalina Ivannitch had spotted lying unused on one of his early visits to Trepke. Before there was any idea of taking over the whole estate, he had begged and prayed Makarenko to get permission to bring the cistern over to the old colony to use in the bath-house, but he had been unsuccessful. It was eventually retained at Trepke for use in the stables.

The repair work was undertaken as soon as material became available, usually by local craftsmen assisted by the lads, but

<sup>1</sup>Roughly equivalent to our R.D.C.

<sup>2</sup>*Poem*, p. 45.

as there was a widespread shortage of building materials, particularly glass and joiner's ironmongery, it was nearly two years before the new colony was in a proper state for occupation. In the summer-time some of the colonists camped in the new property and looked after the gardens and orchards, while in the meantime the old colony remained the chief seat of operations, including the building up of stocks of implements, seed, and so on. About this time another fresh group of pupils was sent to the colony, lads of an entirely different type to those previously admitted. A general rounding up of the partisan and bandit gangs in the Ukraine had been effected, and the juvenile courts sent all the youths into homes of various kinds. As Makarenko remarked, none of these boys had been anything more desperate than stable-lads or cook's assistants, but their life with the partisans had not made them particularly amenable to discipline, while their general attitude to others was based on a "defensive-aggressive pose of primitive heroism".<sup>1</sup> He adds that most of them had very strong and even likeable characters, but their intellectual level was extremely low.

Makarenko's task of nursing his young community to a full realization of its independence and responsibility was made very difficult by these almost weekly additions to the colony, and what he called "events" followed swiftly one after another. At one time there was a serious outbreak of anti-Semitism, which was put down with great difficulty; on another occasion there was a stand-up fight between a group of colonists and the lads of the village, who were jealous of the town lads' success with the local girls, and in the affray knives were drawn and several wounded on both sides; and almost without interruption a certain section of the lads organized raids on the villagers' cellars, food stores, and growing crops. He remarked of this period: "During this time every day was for me an inescapable mixture of confidence, joy, and despair." The members of the staff, devoted as they were, had been working without a break

<sup>1</sup>*Poem*, p. 55.

for nearly two years, and were naturally very tired and discouraged, especially when Makarenko decided on a step he had hesitated to take hitherto, of expelling one or two of the ring-leaders. "Are we on the right road?" one of his assistants said. "Perhaps we are making a terrible mistake; there is no real community spirit here, yet we are always talking about the community. Perhaps we have hypnotized ourselves with our dreams of the community."

After one very serious incident Makarenko went out one afternoon alone into the forest, largely in order to get a little peace and quiet for a thorough review of his position and to decide on his next move. His walk through the "dreaming woods"—a common and delightful Russian expression—calmed his mind to some extent, but as he was making his way back to the colony and his troubles he was surprised to notice that he was being shadowed by some of the lads, who kept dodging from tree to tree in order to avoid being seen. At length he called the nearest lad to him, but before he could ask what the idea was in tracking him in that manner, the lads said:

"Give us your revolver!"

At first Makarenko failed to see the point of this request, then it suddenly dawned on him that after word had gone round that he had been seen walking alone in the woods, the colonists had not unnaturally jumped to the conclusion that he had gone out to shoot himself. He pointed out that in the first place he had left his revolver in his study, and in the second place there were plenty of trees handy, from which he could hang himself if he wished, and in the last resort there was always the river. That same evening the lads were mooning about the dormitory, wondering what on earth to do with themselves, when one of them suggested a game of forfeits. Makarenko describes the scene in these words:

"And we actually played at forfeits. The life of a teacher has its ironic moments; here were forty or more ragged urchins, all more or less hungry and tired, and several weary teachers,

by the fitful light of kerosene lamps, playing at forfeits! Only we barred kissing."<sup>1</sup>

As has already been pointed out, Makarenko was not above using his wits when it came to getting round official red tape and obstruction, and on occasion he was even ready to take advantage of his pupils' general lack of scruple concerning other people's property. During the winter of 1922 they had very great difficulty in feeding their horses. At that time they had no meadows for hay, and the oats sown by Kalina Ivannitch hardly lasted till Christmas, while their repeated attempts to obtain forage from the provender offices met with no success. This was of course general in the Ukraine at that time, and was the aftermath of the two years of drought and the subsequent famine. Things became so bad that the senior stable lad, Anton Bratchenko, a former bisprizornie, informed Makarenko that the horses had not had any food at all for two days, and were just lying on the floor of the stable. It was clear that something desperate would have to be done about it. The next morning Anton, after a merely routine tidying of the stables, disappeared, and nobody seemed to know where he had gone. The following morning he reappeared in the colony, and was soon followed by a villager with a brand-new wagon carrying a load of hay. He informed Makarenko that he had brought the requisition, would he please sign the receipt? After some hesitation Makarenko signed it and the hay was soon transferred to the loft. The next day another villager, a relative of the first, brought a further load, and was followed by two others with loads of oats. After accepting the first, Makarenko could hardly refuse the others, but wondered what would happen when the authorities got to know about it. At length he had a note from the District Produce Commissar asking him on whose authority he had accepted the requisitions, but he left the note unanswered. Some months later a smart turn-out with a pair of black horses dashed into the colony, and Bratchenko rushed into Makarenko's office:

<sup>1</sup>*Poem*, p. 135.

"'Here he comes,' he said, breathlessly.

"'Who?'

"'The boss—about the hay.' Anton sat down behind the stove and tried to look as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth.

"The District Produce Commissar was the usual sort of thing: young, spruce-looking, and carrying a revolver in his belt.

"'Are you the principal?'

"'I am.'

"'Did you receive my notice?'

"'I did.'

"'Then why didn't you answer it? Here I've had to come out myself and investigate. Who gave you permission to accept the requisitions?'

"'We took them without permission.'

"'What?' The District Produce Commissar nearly jumped out of his skin. 'You know what this means, I suppose? You know you can be arrested for this?'

"'I was aware of this.'

"'I shall be glad to see the end of it,' I said wearily. 'I cannot justify myself or wriggle out of it. And don't shout. Do what you think is necessary.'

"He paced across my little room from corner to corner. 'This is the very devil!' he mumbled to himself.

"Anton jumped up from behind the stove and paced after the peppery District Produce Commissar.

"'Nobody would stop to look whose requisition it was, when their horses hadn't been fed for four days. If your two blacks had nothing else to do for four days but read the paper, how could you have dashed into the colony?'

"The Commissar stopped abruptly, and asked:

"'And who are you? What are you doing here?'

"'This is our senior stable lad; he is the individual more or less involved in the matter,' I said.

After considering the problem for some time, the Commissar

decided that since the requisitions had been signed for, the various authorities concerned would have to square the matter up between themselves. Finally he asked Makarenko:

"Where do you find these fine lads?"

"We make them ourselves," I replied.

"Bratchenko looked up and asked the District Produce Commissar politely:

"Shall we give your horses a feed?"

"Yes. By all means. Thank you." <sup>1</sup>

While the repair work was going on slowly but surely at Trepke, Makarenko found to his dismay that the order for possession of the 150 acres of land which went with it was hardly worth the paper it was written on, as the land had been cultivated by the locals for some years, and the village Soviet refused to look at his claim.

In this episode we catch a glimpse of the struggle against the 'kulaks' <sup>2</sup> (the richer peasants) which a few years later culminated in the collectivization of agriculture. This struggle was particularly sharp in the Ukraine, mainly because the kulaks there formed a larger proportion of the peasant population than in other and less prosperous parts of Russia, and in addition there was still a good deal of Ukrainian nationalist and anti-Soviet feeling among them. Indeed the struggle has by no means ended even now. Makarenko assumed, of course, that after the revolution the Trepke land had been divided up in the proper manner among the poorer peasants of the community. Consequently he felt that by insisting on his claim he would be taking the poor peasants' land, as he said: "the land of the hard-working peasants, to whom it was as necessary as the air they breathed".

As it turned out, however, his scruples were unnecessary, for one evening the lads brought the secretary of the village Kom-

<sup>1</sup>*Poem*, p. 97.

<sup>2</sup>The word "kulak" means fist, and refers to the grasping proclivities of these "enemies of the people".

somol (Young Communist League) organization into the dormitory, and he informed Makarenko that the land which had been apportioned to the colony was not held by poor peasants at all, but had been seized by the leaders of the village Soviet (consisting, of course, of the rich kulaks themselves), and divided amongst their friends and relations. They had succeeded in stopping the mouth of the chairman of the local Poor Peasants' Committee with some of their bootleg liquor, and what poor peasants there were in the village were no better off than they had been before. It was their complete selfishness and addiction to graft of this type which accounted for most of the kulaks' unpopularity. However, this information was quite enough for Makarenko and his colonists, and having the advantage in numbers and spirit, they soon established their claim by main force and in the autumn put down their first sowing of winter corn in the new colony.

One of the main difficulties in working their land, both in the old colony and later at Trepke, was their lack of stock and equipment, particularly horses and farm implements. The shortage of horses was, in fact, general in the Ukraine at this time, as the German occupation during the war, and the subsequent depredations of Polish and White interventionists had between them stripped the country of stock, particularly such easily transportable animals as horses. To overcome this difficulty, Makarenko had made a bargain with one of the local agricultural committees to borrow a couple of horses for a period, agreeing to pay a fine of so much grain for every day they kept them over the stipulated time. They were used to good effect during the spring for ploughing, but when it came to reaping they felt the need of a proper reaping machine. Curiously enough, just as they were pondering over this new problem, a peasant from a distant village, known to one of the lads, brought a machine in fairly good condition, and said he wanted to exchange it for a horse. According to his story, he already had one reaper, but as his eldest son was about to get married, he wanted to give him a

horse to set him up. This sounded all right to Makarenko, but the lads were a trifle sceptical. Their version was that the villager had got wind of the government's intention to confiscate superfluous farm implements, and he wanted to get rid of it before the commissars got to him. It was finally decided, after a good deal of hesitation on Makarenko's part, to exchange one of the loaned horses for the peasant's reaper. It was an excellent bargain from the point of view of the colony, and the villager appeared quite satisfied, though Makarenko wondered what the chairman of the local agricultural committee would have to say when he heard about it. They had not long to wait, as the field of rye was ready for cutting a few days later. Makarenko had already adopted the practice of making a celebration of the first reaping, and on this occasion the committee chairman was invited down to take part in the ceremony, together with other official representatives from the Party, the Education Authority, and other interested bodies. The first question he asked, of course, was: "How are the horses?" He was assured they were quite fit, though one of them had been working rather hard lately and had been sent to the other colony for a week or so out to grass. He was naturally very interested in the new reaping machine, and fell in readily with the lads' suggestion that he take charge of it for the ceremony of reaping the first sheaf. At the official dinner later in the day, the conversation turned almost inevitably to horses in general, and the two loaned horses in particular, and it was clear that the chairman was not altogether happy about the fact that since he had been in the colony he had only seen one of them. At length one of the older lads asked him, apropos of horses:

"Which do you think is more valuable, a horse or a reaping machine?"

"It all depends on the horse," he answered quite innocently.

"Well, a horse like Tiger, for instance." (Tiger was the name of the missing animal.)

"The chairman of the agricultural committee laid his spoon



down and twitched his moustache. When the lads burst out into roars of laughter it began to dawn on him what had happened.

"We obtained the reaping machine in exchange for 'Tiger,' I explained as gently as I could.

"Well I'll be damned! You young devils!" he spluttered."

Fortunately it all turned out quite happily. As a practical man the chairman was bound to admit that the colony had had the best of the bargain, and he was sensible enough to see that this was the kind of spirit that needed encouragement. In the end he made them a present of the horses, and the lads expressed their appreciation in the time-honoured Ukrainian manner by seizing him and throwing him in the air.

Two years after its opening the colony numbered 120 pupils, and the farm had been developed to such an extent that they possessed sixteen cows, about fifty pigs, eight horses, a large kitchen garden in the old colony and several orchards in the new, and a considerable area under cereals, in all about 150 acres of arable. At this point Sherry the agronomist was appointed to supervise the farming work, and as Makarenko remarked at the time, and as will be seen later, his influence was not confined to this alone, but was also felt in the general educational work of the colony.

For some time the colony had been accustomed to call itself the "Gorki colony". Makarenko, as has already been pointed out, had always been attracted by this writer, and when he was first asked to take over the direction of a home for young offenders, he described how this knowledge of Gorki's work helped him:

"The old experience of colonies for juvenile delinquents was no use to me at all, and new experience there was none, nor were there any books on the subject. I was in a difficult, not to say hopeless, position . . . I was obliged to fall back on my own general notions regarding human nature, and this for me meant a return to Gorki."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A. S. Makarenko, *Gorki and my Life*, published by the NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, 1918.

During the long evenings of the first and second winters in the colony he organized reading parties, in which they all joined in the study of the Russian classics, such as Pushkin, Korolenko, Mamina Sibiryak, Veresayeva, and particularly Gorki. His stories of Gorki's early days entranced the boys:

"At first they just didn't believe me when I told them the true story of Gorki's life, but sat there in an astonished silence. At length one of them shot a question at me:

" 'Do you mean to say, then, that Gorki was like us? Goodness!'

"From that time forward Gorki's life seemed as if it were a part of our life. Its various episodes served for comparison with our own experiences, it was used as a source for nicknames, and gave us a scale on which to measure human values."<sup>1</sup>

In a very short time all the institutions and traders with which the colony had to do business became accustomed to using the name, and this in itself, as Makarenko remarked, was not without its educational influence on the children.<sup>2</sup>

The desire was expressed to get in touch with Gorki himself, but at that time nobody knew his address, and it was only by accident that in 1925 they found he was living in Italy. A letter was accordingly written, and the envelope given the ideally simple address: Italia, Massimo Gorki. On 9th July of that year they received his first reply, and from that time until Gorki's return to the U.S.S.R. in 1928 a regular correspondence was kept up, and later he paid them the honour of a visit. In 1929 Gorki wrote:

"I had been in continuous correspondence with the pupils of the colony for four years, and had noted how their writing, spelling, and grammar had improved, and their social outlook broadened, so that from little anarchists, tramps, and thieves they had developed into fine, hard-working lads and girls."

<sup>1</sup>Gorki himself wrote a fascinating account of his early struggles against poverty in his autobiographical works *Among the People* and *My University*.

<sup>2</sup>It is common practice in Russia to adopt the name of a famous man in connection with educational and philanthropic institutions.

After meeting Makarenko he wrote:

"Who is this man who had re-educated and changed the lives of so many hundreds of children? The organizer of the colony is one A. S. Makarenko. He is without question an exceedingly skilful teacher. The children like him and speak of him in such a way as to make you think they had invented him themselves. Externally he is severe and rather sparing of words; about forty, with a long nose and extremely sharp eyes; he looks like a soldier and a village schoolmaster rolled into one. He speaks in a hoarse voice, as if he were perpetually struggling with a cold; moves deliberately, but is always there on time; and knows all his pupils personally, summing them up in five words so that you have as it were a snapshot of the child's character."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A. M. Gorki, *Our Achievements*, vol. ii, 1929; quoted in Medynski.

## CHAPTER III

### TREPKE

IN the autumn of 1923 the whole colony was moved over into the now fully repaired and refurnished buildings at Trepke, and the colony itself was transferred from the Poltava District Education Authority, a purely local body, and came under the direct control of the Ukraine Ministry of Education, as a show-place for the education of the "morally defective".

Thanks to the appointment of Edvard Nikolayevitch Sherry as agronom, or scientific agricultural instructor and manager, the work of the farm improved out of all knowledge; the fields yielded them an all-the-year-round sufficiency of corn and vegetables and fodder for the cattle; they possessed a herd of Swiss pedigree cows, and some pedigree pigs, which, according to Lucy L. Wilson, an American visitor who saw the colony in 1925, were of a Yorkshire breed. (One of these animals was known as Cleopatra. This looks a lot funnier in Russian than it does in English.) They also cultivated a large garden and greenhouses, and there were several orchards on the terraces leading down to the Kolomak river. In addition they ran the mill, which ground all the flour for the colony and the neighbouring villages; a blacksmith's and wheelwright's shop, which serviced their own farm implements and did similar work for outside clients; boot- and shoe-making workshops; a carpenter's shop; and the girls had their own dressmaking workshop, besides running the laundry.

As far as the children were concerned, all this work was organized in a system of "detachments", which later assumed two distinct forms, the "regular" detachments and the "combined" detachments. The whole thing began, according to Makarenko, more or less as a joke. One winter a group of lads

was organized to collect firewood, and was put under the direction of one of the older lads, one Burun. As usual, there was always a certain amount of horse-play on the way home, and on one occasion the lads imagined themselves as a partisan "detachment", common at that time in the Ukraine in the fight against the White interventionists. They "captured" some stray lads, and held a mock trial on their return to the colony, whereupon the victims were sentenced to a double helping of dinner that night. But the name "detachment" stuck, and after the store of firewood had been built up for the winter, Burun's detachment was put on the construction of forcing frames at Trepke. A day or so later one of the lads came up to Makarenko and said:

"What goes on here, anyhow? Here we have Burun's 'detachment', but what about all we other lads?"

This did not take a lot of thinking over. The issue of a "prikaz" or order of the day was already an institution in the colony, and next morning a "prikaz" announced the formation of a second detachment under Zadoroff to work in the carpenter's shop. This soon developed into a regular system, the third and fourth detachments were set up, and a fifth, composed of the girls working in the dressmaking shop, was arranged under the direction of Nastya Nocheyevna.

At first there was some debate as to the best title to give the leader. With their heads full of romantic notions of the role of the partisans, some of the lads wanted to call Burun the "ataman" (or hetman), but this suggestion was frowned upon by Makarenko, who said it smacked too much of bandit gangs, so the word "commander" was adopted instead, after the manner of the Red Army.

"The system of detachments was worked out finally and in great detail the following spring. The detachments themselves were made smaller and were confined to the various workshops. I remember that the cobblers' was always the first, the blacksmith's was known as the sixth, the stables the second, the

piggeries the tenth, and so on. At first we had no settled constitution, and the commanders were appointed by me, but in the spring I had occasion to call together the leaders for their advice, and the children soon found a high-sounding title for these meetings—they called them the Soviet of Commanders.

"A most important rule, which has been retained to this day, was the absence of any kind of privilege for the commanders; they never had any more than anybody else and were never excused from work.

"In the spring of 1923 we introduced a further complication into the detachment system, and this was probably the most important idea we had in the whole thirteen years of the colony's existence. It was all that was wanted to weld our system of detachments into a really strong and united community, in which we had working and organizational differentiation, the democracy of the general meeting, orders of the day, and the full subordination of comrade to comrade, but with no tendency to create an aristocracy, a ruling caste.

"This complication was the 'combined' detachment. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

The "combined detachments" originated from the fact that in the spring and early summer the work of the colony was almost wholly on the farm. Naturally most of the lads preferred to spend their time in the workshops, for although the farm work was interesting enough in its way, and took them out into the open air, their work in the shops was actually teaching them a trade which would be much more useful than farm labouring later on. But sometimes the whole labour force of the colony was needed in the fields or gardens, and Sherry naturally demanded that the jobs should be carried out by a definite gang, with a leader to answer for discipline, tools, reports, and the quality of the work. Out of this arose the combined detachments, composed of varying numbers of pupils, and engaged on short-term, temporary duties, such as lifting a few

<sup>1</sup>*Poem*, p. 188.

rows of potatoes, cleaning farm machinery, or shifting a load or so of manure. Each combined detachment was embodied for a week or less, according to the length of the task allotted to it, and had its own commander, even if it were only composed of two lads. The Soviet of Commanders rarely chose one of their own number as a commander of a combined detachment; they considered they had quite enough on their plate as it was; so that in course of time almost every pupil in the colony except the obviously incapable were given a chance of assuming responsibility. The commanders of the combined detachments were, of course, members *pro tem.* of the Soviet of Commanders.

Every colonist was a member of a regular detachment, and under the supervision of his regular commander; this defined his place in the workshops, his position in the dining-room and dormitory, and in general his status in the colony. But in addition to this he would also be a member and perhaps the commander of a combined detachment, with, as often as not, a full-blown commander of a regular detachment, sometimes his own, under his orders for the time being. After the particular job which called it into being had been completed, the combined detachment would be dispersed, and its members drafted into others, under other commanders. This enabled Makarenko to give every lad a chance to show what he could do, whether in a position of responsibility or as one of the rank and file.

This system of combined detachments was also carried over into the leisure activities of the colony, and this gives as good an idea as any of how it worked. Soon after settling down at Trepke a dramatic club was started. One of the old barns was converted into a theatre, with a proper stage and seating arrangements, and a series of plays was produced weekly, to which not only the pupils and workers in the colony, but neighbours from the surrounding villages, and even parties of friends from the town, were invited. These shows became so popular, and the pressure of rehearsals, preparation of scenery, and so on,

made such heavy demands on the members of what had hitherto been a voluntary club, that some of them protested and demanded a Soviet of Commanders on it.

"The Soviet decided that from that moment the dramatic club as such would cease to exist, and that all would share in the work—and that was that.

"Our Soviet always loved to try its hand at formulating a prikaz'. This one ran as follows:

"PAR. 5.

"The Soviet of Commanders hereby puts on record its opinion that the work of producing the weekly plays is of such a character as to be obligatory on every colonist; therefore, for the production of the next play, 'The Adventures of the Family of Good-for-Nothings', the following combined detachments should be enrolled. . . .'

"A list of the necessary combined detachments then followed, just as if the matter had nothing at all to do with Art but was merely concerned with hoeing a field of beetroot or sacking potatoes. . . .

"But a combined detachment meant this: a definite list and no excuses, nightly reports with punishments for late-comers, etc.; commanders giving orders, with the customary reply: 'Aye-aye', and a salute; and in case of a refusal to obey orders, a severe wiggling from the Soviet of Commanders or a general meeting, or in the last resort a carpeting in front of me and fatigues or house-arrest on a half-holiday. This was reform with a vengeance. . . .

"Usually at the Sunday meetings of the Soviet I announced the play for the following Sunday, and which colonists would be required in the cast. These were immediately enrolled in the '6A' combined detachments, and the commander elected. The remaining pupils were then distributed among the other theatrical combined detachments, all of which had the distinguishing number 6 and officiated for that particular production. The following detachments were constituted:



"6 'A'	actors
"6 'S'	stewards
"6 'C'	costumes
"6 'H'	heating
"6 'D'	decorations
"6 'R'	requisition
"6 'L'	lighting
"6 'F'	furniture- and scene-shifters
"6 'N'	noises and effects
"6 'Cu'	curtain.

"During the week these combined detachments, and especially their commanders, would be running round the colony, and sometimes even as far as the town, like 'salted hares'. . . ." <sup>1</sup>

Eventually all questions dealing with the conduct of the colonists were discussed and decided upon by the Soviet of Commanders, and the colony was in effect almost completely autonomous. Makarenko found that in most cases the offenders were far more afraid of being brought up to answer for their misdeeds before the Soviet or the general meeting of their comrades, than of anything he could do to them.

Up to the time of the transfer of the colony to Trepke, Makarenko had made many fruitless efforts to obtain permission from the authorities to form a cell of the Young Communist League (Komsomol) in his institution. The opinion seemed to be that former bisprizornie and malefactors were unsuitable as members of the Komsomol, and as its main function was to select, educate, and train future members of the Party, this was not to be wondered at. At their theatrical shows and on other occasions they often entertained Komsomol members from the villages and even from the factories in the towns, but in spite of their active support, the authorities were adamant. But when the control of the colony was transferred from the local authority and became vested in the Ukraine Ministry of Education, Makarenko tried again, and this time he managed to convince them

<sup>1</sup>*Poem*, p. 263.

that he had suitable material for political education in the colony, so he was allowed to go ahead and formed a strong Komsomol cell, which put the colonists on an equality with their visitors and enabled them to take an active part in the national work of this organization.

The formal school work was done mostly in winter, for in the summer all hands were wanted on the farm. As a rule the children spent half the day in the classroom, and this allowed the work to be done in shifts. Some of the older children were prepared for the entrance examination for the "Rabfak", or Workers' Faculty, a kind of Folk High School or continuation school, residential in character, for suitable workers whose education had been neglected earlier. An interesting account of the work of one of these Rabfaks is given in E. M. Almedingen's novel *Froesia*. Later some of these more promising pupils went on to the college and the university, while others found jobs, or came back to the colony and assisted in the work of "conquering Kuriajh", which was the next episode in the story of Makarenko's life-work.

## CHAPTER IV

### KURIAJH

THE next two years at Trepke were spent largely in broadening and perfecting this rather complicated organization, but later the colony seemed to get into a groove, and Makarenko began to feel that many of the lads were losing their former enthusiasm. For one thing a large number of the older pupils who had been in the colony from the beginning had graduated to the Rabfak, and although the lads who remained were quite capable of keeping up the tone, they had not actually experienced the "events" which had originally established that tone. He wrote of this period: "Yes, for nearly two years we had stayed in one place; the same fields, the same flower-beds, the same dining-rooms and dormitories and the same annual cycle of events. Everything was at a standstill. Yet there can be no halting-places in the life of a community. We must always see new prospects before us. Material comfort can never be an end in itself, it can only be a means, a condition of further development. . . ." What was wanted was some new enterprise that would weld the new generation into a community, as the equipment and transfer to Trepke did the old one.

There were several false alarms before the real opportunity presented itself. At one time there was some talk of transferring the whole colony to an island on the lower reaches of the Dnieper, known in Russian as Zaporozhe, or beyond the Rapids, but this was called off until the general outline of the Dneiper Dam project became clearer. In the meantime, in the suburbs of Kharkov, in the buildings of the former Kuriajh monastery, a home for bisprizornie had been run for years. The management of this colony, which consisted of upwards of 280 pupils, was so bad that no educational work of any kind was even

attempted, the buildings were falling into rack and ruin, and the children spent most of their time wandering about in rags, or engaged in banditry or petty theft in the Kharkov bazaars, returning to the colony merely to eat and sleep. The responsible department of the Ukraine Ministry of Education were naturally rather ashamed of this institution, especially since it was situated practically on their doorstep, and one day, when the place was being discussed in Makarenko's presence, he was asked to take it over and see if his methods would result in any improvement. The suggestion was made that his own Gorki colony from 'Trepke should be transferred lock, stock, and barrel to Kuriakh, forming the nucleus of a colony of some 400 pupils.

At first Makarenko refused to consider the proposal; he saw no reason why he should risk the success of his experiment at 'Trepke; but at length he consented to visit the Kuriakh institution and report on his findings to the general meeting of the Gorki colonists, and promised to abide by their decision. After his report the general meeting of colonists asked him a number of questions, and his answers, to his great surprise, seemed to amuse the lads rather than astonish them:

" 'But what are the forty teachers doing all the time?'

" 'I don't know.'

"Laughter.

" 'Anton Simeonovitch, did you punch anybody's jaw?'

(This was an old joke on Makarenko, and referred to an incident in the early days of the Gorki colony.)

"Laughter.

" 'Is there a dining-room?'

" 'Yes, there's a dining-room, but the children have no shoes to their feet, so they fetch the dishes to the dormitories and eat it there.'

"Laughter.

" 'Who goes for it?'

" 'I didn't see. They fetch their own, I think.'

" 'They take it in turns, I suppose?'

" 'Yes. As far as I know, they take it in turns.' "

" 'It's well organized, then.' "

" 'Laughter.' "<sup>1</sup>

After some discussion, mostly opposed to taking the work on, Kalina Ivannitch, somewhat to Makarenko's surprise, made an impassioned appeal to the children to come to the help of their comrades in distress at Kuriajh. This appeal was successful and the general meeting passed a unanimous resolution adopting the Kuriajh colony, leaving Makarenko to lay down his own conditions for the transfer.

These conditions were:

(1) The dismissal of the entire present staff at Kuriajh, with the exception of a few minor household servants.

(2) The appointment of 15 new teachers, instead of the 40 needed according to the regulations for children's homes.

(3) The salary of these teachers to be 80 roubles a month instead of the usual 40. (In other words, Makarenko was demanding a properly qualified and experienced staff.)

(4) The staff to be selected by Makarenko himself, subject to the Teachers' Union retaining the right of dismissal.

These conditions gave rise to considerable opposition both from the trade union leaders and the Ukraine Education Authority, not to speak of the present staff at Kuriajh, but after a good deal of acrimonious discussion Makarenko noted with relief that the debate was carried into the higher circles of Party administration, and he was left to make what arrangements he considered necessary to effect the transfer. A deadline was fixed for 5th May to transfer the whole Gorki organization to Kuriajh, and the colony soon plunged itself into feverish preparation for the great day.

A special combined detachment, consisting of nine of the older colonists and one teacher, with Makarenko in charge, was elected to go in advance and arrange the transfer. A week later, on the appointed day, the entire Gorki colony, headed by the

<sup>1</sup>*Peem*, p. 392.

band and with their colours flying, marched into Kuriajh, and after dismissing the parade a general meeting was called, including the Kuriajh element. At this meeting a resolution, prepared in advance by the Gorki Komsomol committee, was passed unanimously, outlining the arrangements for the next few days. After the meeting such of the Kuriajh pupils as could be rounded up had their hair cut by four barbers brought specially from Kharkov for the purpose, a bath (their first, probably, for months), and discarded their rags for new uniforms similar to those worn by the Gorki lads and girls. All the colonists, new and old, were then allotted to twenty regular detachments, the commanders appointed, and the day closed with a ceremonial dinner, with speeches, etc.

I have spent some time over this episode, because it gives a very good idea of Makarenko's methods. The most striking points are that he refused to do anything at all till he had the general meeting of the colonists behind him; he demanded a fully qualified staff; sent his combined detachment, consisting of pupils he could rely on as being the best representatives of the Gorki traditions, to prepare the way; and finally the actual taking over was done in one fell swoop, and not left to a process of "gradual infiltration", a course which had been suggested by the higher officials of the Ministry.

The effect of this "lightning blow", as Makarenko called it, was very much as he expected; that is, it varied a good deal according to the children themselves. Quite a number were strongly attracted to the new régime from the beginning, for with the realism of children they appreciated that it was all being done for their eventual benefit; but with many the old habits were too strongly entrenched to be overcome at once.

"The behaviour of most of the Kuriajh children first thing next morning was all that could be desired, but by dinner-time it was clear that some of them had never been accustomed to hard work. After dinner quite a number made no attempt to return to their detachments, but hid themselves somewhere out

of sight, and several, by sheer force of habit, mooched off to town in the evening."

Later he shows how the children themselves found a way to deal with this:

"Some of them hid themselves away quietly, but this did not worry me overmuch, as the kids themselves found a technique to handle this. Wherever he went, the truant had to come back at dinnertime, and take his place at table with his own detachment. As far as the Kuriajh children were concerned, little notice would be taken, and all that happened was that somebody would say naïvely:

" 'I thought you'd run away?'

"The Gorki lads, on the other hand, were more observant. The truant would approach his table with a nonchalant air and try to give the impression that nothing out of the ordinary had occurred, and there was no need to take any special notice of him. But the commander would look up and say to one Kolka:

" 'Kolka! Move up a bit! Can't you see Krivoruchka is here, and make a place for him! And get him a clean plate! What sort of a spoon is that you're giving him? Look at it!'

"And the spoon would fly through the window.

" 'Pour him out some of the best! The very best! . . . Pyotka, run out into the kitchen and get him a better spoon! . . . Hurry up! . . . Stepka, cut him some bread. . . . Good Lord! Don't cut it like that! . . . That's how the yokels cut it! He wants it thinner than that. . . . And where's Pyotka gone with that spoon? . . . Vanka! . . . Go and tell Pyotka to hurry up with that spoon! . . . '

"Poor old Krivoruchka would sit there in front of his plate of steaming beetroot stew and his face would get redder and redder. From a neighbouring table someone would lean over portentously:

" 'Look! The 13th have a visitor. . . . '

"Pyotka then comes out of the kitchen with the usual spoon in his hand, but carrying it as if it lay on a silver salver. Then the commander would get really wild:

"What sort of a spoon is this you've brought? Who told you to bring one like that? Bring a bigger one! . . ."

"At this Pyotka<sup>1</sup> gets a trifle confused, and instead of going through the kitchen door tries to climb through the window. Soon he would reappear with one of the ladles—even the kitchen staff assisted at these mysteries—and the whole dining-room would dissolve in laughter."

They had other methods for column-dodgers in the fields. Only three days after the commencement of the new régime one of the ringleaders of the old Kuriajh gang, one Khovrakh, complained of sunstroke, and lay down for a while under a bush. The next time this happened word was passed round, and a special van, flying a Red Cross, with girls dressed as nurses, and one of the older lads armed with the smith's bellows, came flying into the field. The bellows were used with great effect on the ailing Khovrakh, who soon decided that the cure was worse than the disease. For days afterwards he was being asked how he felt.

"Actually this was, of course, partisan warfare, but it proceeded out of the general tone of the colony and the general desire of the community to improve the work. And this tone and this desire were after all the real subject of my technical (i.e. educational) efforts."

At length these methods reaped their reward, and "again the days flew past, strenuous and happy days; full of little cares, little successes, and little failures". Life at Kuriajh took on the same even tenor as it had at Trepke, except that they had nearly three times as many mouths to feed, and that the winter of 1926-7 would soon be upon them. They carried on very much

<sup>1</sup>Kolka, Pyotka, Stepka, and Vanka are the diminutives respectively of Nicolai, Pyotr (Peter), Stepan, and Ivan, and correspond roughly to our Nicky, Pete, Stevie, and Johnnie.



the same kind of work there, but in addition to the usual cobbler's and carpenter's workshops they organized a timber-yard, with seasoning lofts, saw-benches, planing and moulding machines, and they designed and made themselves a tenoning machine. In the joiner's shop they made patent beehives, with all the necessary furniture and comb-boxes, for sale to the farmers and on order for the government. The school was extended till it had six classes; i.e. the children received full schooling up to fourteen, and many evening club activities were started, such as model-aeroplane making, sculpture, choral speaking, pantomimes, and fireworks. The library was extended till they had no more shelves for the books, and no more room for the readers, and finally they started a brass band, which, as Makarenko said, was very often little more than a frightful nuisance in the colony, but was of great help on their annual May-day parades in the town. The chapel of the old monastery was converted into a cinema and, as he expresses it, drew a far greater body of worshippers than it had ever done before in its entire history; in fact it became a social centre for miles around.

All this work, both at Trepke and at Kuriajh, had been carried out to the accompaniment of a running fire of criticism and opposition on the part of various members of the Ukraine Ministry of Education and officialdom generally. It is probable that his very success aroused their jealousy, especially since he was the type of man who had neither the time nor the inclination to argue with them about the only thing they were capable of arguing about—what they were pleased to call first principles. He was constantly plagued by visits of inspection, and remarked on one occasion that he was getting used to the role of "hunted wolf". Indeed he reduced one visitor to a state of speechless horror when he told her point-blank that he had ceased reading books on pedagogy years ago. Their chief bone of contention was that Makarenko's methods smacked too much of "militarization", or, as they termed it, "barrack-room education". The prevailing theory at that period in official (Russian) educational

circles was that all discipline should be "self-discipline", and that no sort of external compulsion, least of all on the part of the teacher, should be used on the child. This was the theory of "free education", with its slogans "Children are the flowers of life" and "Treat childhood with reverence", which aroused Makarenko to anger and sometimes to bitterness. They were horrified when he told them that he punished offenders (by solitary confinement and deprivation of meals, etc.) and horrified still more when he said that he was unable to conceive of education without some form of punishment. His vendetta with the authorities was also coloured by political considerations, for many of his enemies in high places were adherents of the Ukrainian pseudo-Nationalist movement, which still hoped that the Ukraine would secede from the Union eventually, and which Makarenko, in common with most sensible Ukrainians, treated with the contempt it deserved. At length Makarenko was summoned to appear before the Education Committee to give a report on his work, and after a stormy discussion the committee came to the conclusion that the system he had described to them was in their opinion "anti-Soviet". His own description of the proceedings is, as usual, well worth reading:

"In the lofty, spacious hall I came at last face to face with the whole assembly of prophets and apostles. It was a veritable Sanhedrim. The discussion was in polite, courteous periods, in which there was a faint friendly aroma of old books and antique leather armchairs. But the prophets and apostles had neither white beards, venerable names, nor famous reputations. What right had they anyway to assume a halo round their heads, or hold in their hands the sacred writings? They were, in actual fact, pretty smart folk, and on their whiskers still hung fragments of the excellent Russian pies they had recently been eating.

"The chief accusing counsel was Professor Chaikin, that same Chaikin who a few years previously had reminded me of one of Chekhov's short stories. In his attack he gave me no quarter:

“Comrade Makarenko attempts to build up the educational process round the idea of duty. It is true, comrades that he adds the word “proletarian”, but this cannot conceal from us the real nature of the conception. We advise Comrade Makarenko to study carefully the historical genesis of the idea of duty. It is a bourgeois idea; an idea of strictly mercantilist origin. Soviet education attempts to broaden personality by the free expression of creative power and inclination, and by developing true initiative, and this has nothing whatever to do with the bourgeois category of duty.

“We have listened to-day with deep regret and astonishment to the respected principal of two of our leading educational institutions advocating the development of a feeling of honour. We are unable to refrain from protesting against such a plea. The Soviet community is at one with the voice of science in rejecting this perversion, which recalls so vividly the influence of the old privileged officer caste, the uniforms, and the press-gangs.

“We are likewise unable to accept the author’s observations with regard to production. Quite possibly from the point of view of the enrichment of the colony this is very useful in its way, but educational science cannot accept productive labour as a leading factor in pedagogical influence, and is even less able to approve of the author’s main thesis, that “the financial balance-sheet is the best teacher of all”. Such a suggestion is nothing less than a vulgarization of the idea of industrial education.’

“There was a good deal more from other speakers in much the same strain, and more still passed judgment on me in silence. At length I lost my temper completely, and poured a bucket of kerosene on the flames:

“Maybe you are quite right, we shall never agree. I don’t understand you at all. According to you, initiative is some kind of inspiration. It comes from nobody knows where, and issues out of inaction and pure idleness. I have told you over and over

again that initiative only arises when there is a problem set, when someone is responsible for its solution, when there are demands upon the community. You also are unable to see my point, and go back again to your theory of an abstract idea of pure initiative, entirely divorced from any idea of work. According to you, in order to get initiative all you have to do is contemplate your own navel. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Fortunately Makarenko had many friends in other government departments, such as the Produce Commissariat, the Land Department, the Provincial Executive Committee, and particularly the O.G.P.U. who had always been convinced of the value of his work. As policemen, who had to handle the raw material before he began to work on it, they probably knew as much about it as anybody. They showed their faith in him by asking him, some time before this occurred, to give them his advice and assistance in supervising a home for bisprizornie in Kharkov which the Ukrainian Chekists, as the O.G.P.U. men had been called formerly, had organized as a memorial to their former leader Felix Edmundovitch Dzerzhinski. This was opened in 1927, and for some time, till his resignation the following summer from Kuriajh, Makarenko ran both these institutions.

He was also able to count on the support of Gorki, who wrote several letters to him just before his return to the U.S.S.R. in 1928, asking to be allowed to plead his case before the authorities, but Makarenko refused to take advantage of his offer.

Shortly after his return to the U.S.S.R. Gorki paid his first visit to the colony which had called itself after him. Although Makarenko had already made up his mind to resign from Kuriajh, he kept his decision to himself for the time being, in order not to spoil his happiness and the joy of his pupils at the long-awaited visit of their famous patron. He took great care, however, in the time which was left to him, to see that most of

<sup>1</sup>*Poem*, p. 618.

the older and better colonists found good jobs in the Kharkov factories or places in the Rabfaks, and arranged for one of his colleagues to take over the supervision of Kuriajh after he left. For the next few years he devoted the whole of this time to the Dzerzhinski commune, as it was called, and never set foot in Kuriajh again.

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## CHAPTER V

### THE DZERZHINSKI COMMUNE

As mentioned above, the Dzerzhinski commune was founded as a memorial to the former leader of the O.G.P.U. and was situated in the outskirts of Kharkov, an industrial city on the eastern borders of the Ukraine, with over three-quarters of a million inhabitants. The commune was opened in 1927 with 160 pupils (including thirty girls) from thirteen to seventeen years of age. Sixty of these were transferred from the Gorki colony at Kuriakh to form a nucleus for the new organization.

The home was built in a splendid position, with the forest on one side and open fields, gardens, and orchards on the other. Tennis and croquet lawns were laid out in the grounds, and the building itself was a two-storied structure of simple architecture, with plenty of light and air, and furnished in a modest but elegant manner.

As far as organization was concerned, Makarenko was given an entirely free hand by the Chekists, as the O.G.P.U. men were formally called, and he worked there for eight years, from 1928 to 1935. As Professor Medynski says: "The years which Makarenko spent at the Gorki colony were formative years, during which the idea of the community or collective as the main organizational form of education was tried out, and new industrial and practical methods of teaching were tested. It was also a formative period for Makarenko himself. The Dzerzhinski commune, however, was the complete realization of Makarenko's educational theories and practice, created by him when he was at the height of his powers; a community which already possessed settled principles, methods, and even traditions."

In the Dzerzhinski commune the main emphasis was laid on

industrial manufacture, instead of the agricultural work which had been the central feature at Trepke and Kuriakh. When the institution was first founded there was a well-equipped wood-working shop and sawmill, a metal-working shop with power-driven lathes and drilling machines, and the girls had their own dressmaking shop. The first three of these workshops, besides fulfilling all the needs of the commune as regards carpentry, furniture, fittings, and so on, undertook from the beginning orders from outside the colony itself.

Production was started with the help of hired craftsmen, but as the children grew familiar with the various processes, their number was reduced to a bare minimum, confined to that part of the work which was outside the physical capacity of the children, such as smith's work and the foundry. One of the central features of the institution was that the children were paid for their work. The newcomers, who were known as "pupils", received a small amount of pocket money, and the remainder of their nominal wage was put aside for them in the savings bank. Later, as their skill and the value of their work increased, they were promoted to the rank of "colonists" (in the Russian they were known as "communari", from the name of the institution, the "commune", but I can hardly transliterate this as "communists", so at the risk of some slight confusion I am sticking to the old Gorki term of "colonist") and were able to dispose personally of larger amounts, up to 120 roubles a month. The rest was divided up between a compulsory levy instituted by the Soviet of Commanders on behalf of the youngsters, and personal savings. Some of the older colonists, by methods which later were known as "Stakhanovite", earned wages of several thousand roubles a month, and in most cases when they left the commune they possessed a useful sum which helped to tide them over the first years of their studies in the training colleges and universities to which most of them proceeded.

From the gradually accumulating funds derived from the

sale of their products the commune built and equipped a factory for the manufacture of electric drills, and later turned to the production of Leica-type cameras and film apparatus, both of which were the first of their kind in the U.S.S.R. Finally the number of pupils and colonists rose to upwards of 600, while the only adults in the works were the engineering and technical supervisors and office workers, and of course the teaching and domestic staff.

The pupils worked four hours each day in the various workshops, and the rest of their time they spent in the schoolroom. Here they went through a secondary-school course, and most of the pupils from the commune were successful later in gaining places in colleges and technical institutes after leaving the commune.

As in the Gorki colony, the chief organ of government was the general meeting of pupils, with the Soviet of Commanders, with the Secretary at its head, as the chief executive. The productive detachments in the workshops were composed of ten to fifteen pupils of varying ages. A prefect was appointed for each day, and he or she was entirely responsible for running the commune for that particular day. Together with the representatives of the Soviet of Commanders appointed for the purpose, the prefect of the day made a morning inspection of the dormitories, with special reference to their cleanliness and the health of the pupils. In each dormitory he would be met by the commander of the detachment occupying that particular dormitory, who would give him the daily report, while the other pupils stood to attention in their places.

According to the recollections of E. O. Reutenberg, a former pupil in the commune, who was killed at the front in 1944, Makarenko himself occasionally accompanied the prefect of the day on these inspections, armed with a thin cane and a snow-white handkerchief. "With the handkerchief he tested the shelves and furniture for dust, and lifted every sheet and blanket with his stick. Such inspection made us very careful over



cleanliness,<sup>1</sup> and it finally became a habit, without which it was inconceivable to live."<sup>2</sup>

Reveille, the call to breakfast, setting out to work, dinner, lights out, the call for a Soviet of Commanders, and general meetings of the commune were announced by special bugle calls.

In addition to all this, there was a wide and varied selection of leisure activities: technical classes, art groups, radio and natural history clubs, theatre, cinema, and library. The commune had its own theatre, in which shows were given both by the commune dramatic society and by visiting companies from the town. In this connection E. O. Reutenberg remarked:

"A great artist himself, the author of notable books and a lover of art, Anton Simeonovitch took great pains to make us all acquainted with the best in literature, music, and painting, and particularly the theatre. He emphasized the importance of aesthetics in life. The main role in this connection was played by the drama.

"One year the Kharkov Theatre of Dramatic Art, together with the Opera House, organized a study group for the discussion of 'Evgenia Onyegin'. This was in a way an 'Onyegin Conference', and it lasted a considerable time. The whole colony gathered in the 'quiet club' (our club activities were divided into two main groups, the 'quiet' clubs and the 'noisy' clubs), the actors and singers and producers came down, and we all studied and listened to 'Evgenia Onyegin'. After this we all went to the Kharkov Opera House, and when the stars of the Stanislavski Theatre came on tour, we all heard the opera again. Our excellent band played Tchaikovski's music with skill and great feeling. The principal part in our aesthetic education was played by our close association with the artists of the Kharkov Theatre of Russian Drama. In the theatre itself we were quite

<sup>1</sup>This stress on what we should take as a matter of course is better appreciated from the low standards of public hygiene in Russia described in Ashby's *Scientist in Russia* (Pelican Books) and Jacob's *Windows in Moscow* (Collins).

<sup>2</sup>E. O. Reutenberg, "Recollections of A. S. Makarenko", *Sov. Ped.*, No. 5-6, 1944.

at home; we had our own box, with ten places for each performance, and they were never empty. We also frequented the other Kharkov theatres, and generally speaking the theatre played an important part in developing the social outlook of the colonists. . . .”

Sport also occupied a major place in the leisure activities of the commune, and included ski-ing, skating, football, tennis, and other games. After working hard for ten months in the year the commune made good use of the two month's summer vacation. The entire community, with Makarenko at its head, set out every summer on a holiday tour which had a different route and objective each year, which took them as far afield as the lower Volga, the Crimea, the Caucasus, Moscow, Odessa, and the shores of the Azov and Black seas. These expeditions were financed from the savings of the children, and as a rule the holiday was spent under canvas, the catering arrangements being organized with the assistance of the local education authorities. In a chapter from an unpublished work entitled *F.D.I.*, Makarenko gives an interesting account of one holiday spent at Sochi, on the Black Sea coast. The commune travelled by train from Kharkov through the Caucasus to Batum, and thence by steamer along the coast to Sochi. In an extract which was printed after his death in *Sovietskaya Pedagogika* he remarks:

“Camping with the colonists was, to say the least of it, a most delightful experience. There seems to be a particular exhilaration in such a camp as this, unlike any other camping experience I have ever had. We had 156 children there, and our régime was built up on a steel skeleton of discipline, with many rules, obligations, duties, and well-understood arrangements. But we were so accustomed to this skeleton, so bound by our habits, which were interwoven so organically with our lives, that we hardly noticed it, and even if we did, it was only to take pride in it. In this way a happy young community lives as no adult group can. Not that there was anything strenuous or

arduous about our life there; we simply abandoned ourselves to nature, to the sea and the palms and the warm sunshine, with no literary preconceptions or intellectual analysis, and without ceasing to remember that we were members of the Dzerzhinski commune, and that at Kharkov there awaited us, after our holidays were over, fresh trials and new anxieties."<sup>1</sup>

In 1935 Makarenko retired from the direction of the Dzerzhinski commune and went to live first at Kiev and then at Moscow, where he commenced a period of intense literary activity, on the advice of his friend Maxim Gorki, who had told him in a letter some two years before: "Nobody knows anything about your splendid work, and nobody ever will know anything, unless you tell them about it yourself."

He had already completed the publication of his great work *The Poem of Education* dealing with the Gorki colonies at Trepke and Kuriajh, and the beginnings of the Dzerzhinski commune,<sup>2</sup> and the next two years were spent in collecting the material and writing his book on family education entitled *The Parent's Book*, which finally appeared in 1937. In writing this book he had considerable assistance from his wife, Galina Stakhyevna Makarenko, a former teacher and inspector of children's homes and colonies under the Ministry. In the same year the magazine *October* published his novel *Honour*, dealing with his early years, and in 1938 his account of his work in the Dzerzhinski commune appeared under the title *Flags on the Battlements*. He was also busy writing articles for the educational journals, besides giving lectures to both parents and teachers, and making notes for the book on communist education which he had suggested, with a certain amount of self-critical irony, in the closing sentences of his *Poem of Education*:

"And perhaps before very long we shall stop writing 'poems

<sup>1</sup>*Sov. Ped.*, No. 5-6, 1944.

<sup>2</sup>This book is a Russian best-seller. Up to the time of the 5th edition, in 1939, nearly half a million copies had been printed.

of education' and compile a simple, straightforward 'Textbook on the Methods of Communist Teaching'.<sup>1</sup>

In February Makarenko was decorated with the order of the Red Banner of Labour for his literary and educational service to the State, and according to E. O. Reutenberg he became at this time a candidate for membership of the Party, sponsored by the Soviet Union of Authors.

On 1st April, 1939, while waiting on a suburban railway platform after spending a short holiday in a rest home for writers near Moscow, Makarenko died suddenly and unexpectedly at the early age of fifty-one. The news of his admission to the Party came a few days later.

After his death a scientific-research laboratory was set up with his widow, Galina Stakhycvna Makarenko in charge, under the general direction of the Academy of Educational Science, for the study of his literary remains and the preparation and publication of monographs on various aspects of his work as a teacher. Up to now the sole output of this organization has been a very short and rather inadequate book by Academician E. N. Medynski, but another monograph on the Dzerzhinski commune is now in preparation.

During the war the Dzerzhinski commune was completely destroyed by the Germans, but a few months ago an account of its partial restoration and reopening was given in the *Teachers' Gazette*.<sup>2</sup> The home is under the direction of R. G. Kirilovski, and one of the teachers, A. V. Alexeyeff, was a former pupil of Makarenko's. According to this account, the traditions and methods which Makarenko created there are being faithfully carried out under the new conditions.

<sup>1</sup>*Poem*, p. 629.

<sup>2</sup>*Teachers' Gazette*, June, 1946.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE MAKARENKO "SYSTEM"

THE foregoing account of Makarenko's life-work in the re-education of juvenile delinquents and bisprizornie, taken very largely from his own book *The Poem of Education*, reads, as he no doubt intended it to read, like a series of happy accidents, transforming the chaos of the first Gorki colony at Poltava to the smooth-running and almost incredible efficiency of the Dzerzhinski commune. But in order to take advantage of these happy accidents, in order to seize the spontaneous ideas of his pupils and steer them along their proper course, Makarenko must have had some strong basic philosophical and political opinions, although he would himself have been perhaps the last man to lay any particular stress on them.

According to Academician E. N. Medynski, Makarenko's system was "the realization in practice of the teachings of Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin on education". This appears at first sight to be little more than the formal pinch of incense to the tribal gods, with which every Russian writer, on any subject under the sun, opens his exposition. Makarenko himself, however, rarely follows this convention; in the whole of his *Poem*, and it is a very long book, there is only one reference to the writings of Lenin (which will be dealt with in its proper place) and the name of Marx is never mentioned. But none the less he was, as Medynski says, a true Marxian in his realist approach to his problems. He was constantly complaining about the "ideal" child of the educationist's study: "a model . . . constructed of the most intangible materials: ideas, printed paper, and Utopian dreams". One of the clearest instances of Makarenko's realism is his description of the Kuriajh bisprizornie. It is rather a long passage, but it is well worth quoting in full, as it gives a

good indication of his attitude to his raw material, which is a fundamental characteristic of any teacher, besides showing some remarkable parallels to recent independent work on the same problem in this country:

"They were certainly real 'bisprizornie', but not what one might call the classical bisprizornie. For some reason or other our writers and intelligentsia generally have pictured these outcasts as some kind of Byronic hero. According to them, they were a race of philosophers, anarchists, and iconoclasts, firm opponents of any ethical system . . . well organized, with their own leaders and their own discipline, carefully worked-out tactics of theft, and a set of laws for their own internal management. A special scientific terminology was invented for them, and their gangs were known as 'spontaneously developing communities'.

"Besides all this, the picture was painted in still deeper colours by the reports of tourists (both Russian and foreign) who declared that they were all thieves, drunkards, cocaine-addicts, and syphilitics. . . . Speaking amongst ourselves, this was of great assistance to the Western European scandalmongers in retailing their stupid and revolting stories of our life.

"But the real fact was that nothing of the kind existed. . . .

"The theory of the continuous existence of a definite community of bisprizornie . . . must be firmly rejected. Most of those who repeated these romantic tales of the street Soviets of anarchists did not know, and could not know, that after the famine and the civil war the resources of the whole community were mobilized to bring millions of these children into proper homes. In the vast majority of cases they had all grown up long ago and had been working in our farms and factories. It is quite another question how effective from an educational point of view their rehabilitation had really been.

"Largely owing to these same romantics the work of the children's homes had been made much more difficult than it need have been, and often resulted in an institution similar to

that at Kuriajh. Consequently some of the boys—I am speaking here only of the boys—went back on the streets, but not because they felt the life of the streets was any better for them. They had no special street ideology at all, but simply went about trying to find a better home or children's colony. They wore down the thresholds of our homes and educational authorities, children's aid committees, and so on, but most of all they sought a place where they could participate in our Soviet construction, evading, as far as possible, the benefits of education altogether. This they rarely achieved. Our steadfast and self-confident brotherhood would not so easily relinquish its hold on its raw material, and was unable to imagine a life without some kind of preparatory education. So the majority of the truants were forced to bend their faltering steps to the foot of the educational ladder a second time, in some home or other, from which, of course, it was again possible to escape. Between the two colonies the life of these young citizens did, in fact, proceed upon the streets, but they had neither the time, the inclination, nor the writing-tables to apply themselves to the formulation of principles or morals, and quite naturally the supply problem, for instance, was often solved in an unprincipled and illegal manner. Having some appreciation of values, the bisprizornie believed in the depths of their souls that they were on the right road to a career as an engineer or lorry-driver, and that to attain this only two things were necessary—to maintain themselves as long as possible on the surface of the globe, even if this meant the lifting of an occasional lady's handbag or gentleman's wallet, and get as near as possible to some garage or engineering shop.

"There have been several attempts to establish a satisfactory classification of human character, and similarly there have been many attempts to define the anti-moral and defective position of the bisprizornie, but to my mind the best classification I ever met was that of the Dzerzhinski people (the O.G.P.U.).

"According to them, all the bisprizornie fell into three main

classes. The first group consisted of those who took active steps to realize their own future, whatever the cost, and who, in pursuit of their ambition to become an engineer, were willing to attach themselves to any part of a passenger train, preferring, as a rule, the through trains and expresses, but not necessarily because of the restaurant-car facilities or the courtesy of the guards. It was often suggested that these travellers were bound for the Crimean health resorts or the watering-places in the south. This was untrue. Their main interests were centred on the Dneiper Dam project, the Donetz or Zaporozhe industrial plants, the shipping at Odessa or Nicolai, or the factories at Moscow or Kharkov.

"The second class had many good qualities, but lacked the air of moral assurance which the first possessed. They also were seekers after the truth, but their ambitions, as a rule, rose no higher than the textile factories or the tanneries, they would have been quite happy with a job in a lumber camp, or failing that would even stoop to work in a cannery or in the last resort collect medicinal herbs.

"The second class were also travellers, but preferred the rear buffers of a tramcar and were unacquainted with the splendours of the Moscow and Jmerinka<sup>1</sup> main-line stations.

"The organizers of the Dzerzhinski commune always preferred to adopt citizens of the first class. For that reason they confined their activities to a thorough search of all the express trains that ran through Kharkov. . . .

"The bisprizornie at Kuriajl, however, were mainly 'third class' . . . the vast majority of whom were neither truants nor seekers of a better future, but placed their tender childish hopes on whatever the education authorities could do for them. A good many of them had already in their short lives had experience of three or four children's homes or colonies, but even this was not always due to their own ambitions, but chiefly to the

<sup>1</sup>This is probably what Erasmus Ward would call a "goak". Jmerinka is a small junction between Kiev and Odessa.



ambition of the educationists themselves for improvements in the system, often so dubious and hazy, that even the expert observer would have some difficulty in deciding whether they were beginning or ending their reorganization, restoration, concentration, completion, allocation, re-allocation, reconstruction, extension, rationalization, evacuation, and re-evacuation. . . .

"It was, of course, in one of these spasms of reorganization that I came to Kuriajh, so the children's attitude to me can easily be imagined. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

In other words, Makarenko's attitude to these lads was based on observation of their actual behaviour, and not on a theory regarding a more or less fictitious "class" of *bisprizornie*, to which in the popular mind they belonged. As far as their past life was concerned Makarenko to a large extent ignored it. What he was concerned with was their future, not their past. In this connection he had probably noticed, as anyone who has anything to do with children is bound to notice, the extraordinary variations in time scale at different ages. To old people in their seventies and eighties events which happened fifty years ago are often clearer than the happenings of the day before, while to a child a month ago, or even a week, is already forgotten. This is probably a defence mechanism. The impressions of childhood are so vivid that if everything were retained the child's mind would be overwhelmed. There is little point in holding against a child a misdemeanour which happened six months or a year before, the only thing a parent or teacher can do is to do what the child does, forget it. Makarenko says that in most cases the delinquents, on arrival at the colony, brought with them an elaborate dossier compiled by the police and the children's aid societies, but in spite of the great temptation to make use of it, it was always locked away and ignored.

In his view the only thing which differentiated the *bisprizornie* from others was the fact that their environment had been

<sup>1</sup>*Poem*, p. 454.

abnormal compared with that of ordinary children brought up in the family circle. Not that this necessarily means adopting any special methods to deal with them, or that the education of children from such an environment is any more difficult than dealing with normal children. Indeed he remarks in one passage: "I have come to the conclusion that, paradoxical as it may seem, normal children or children brought up in normal surroundings are the most difficult of all to educate. They have a more complex nature, make more complicated demands on their teachers, need a deeper culture and a more varied adjustment of method. They do not require such a strong effort of will or the expenditure of so much emotional pressure, but they do demand a more subtle strategy."

In his description of the *bisprizornie* he comes, with his usual insight, to the crux of the matter. What these children needed, and what their environment had so far denied them, was above all security. The more adventurous sought this security in travelling, often at considerable risk to life and limb, to jobs on the Dneiper Dam and other constructive enterprises; the less adventurous tried to find their haven in the various homes which had been opened for them up and down the country. But the need was the same in both cases. This conclusion is borne out by that given by W. I. Thomas in his report on the "Maladjusted Girl", quoted by Dr. Fleming in *The Social Psychology of Education*:

"Delinquency is described not as a consequence of perverted personal characteristics—physical or mental—but as the absence of adjustment by the individual to the demands of society, and as a sequel of the failure of society to satisfy the basic needs or 'wishes' of the individual. These wishes are formulated as follows:

- "(1) The desire for new experience.
- "(2) The desire for security.
- "(3) The desire for response.
- "(4) The desire for recognition.

"Of these the most important in the case of the maladjusted child is the need for security. This requires not mere freedom from want, but acceptance by a group whose approval, affection, and admiration are necessary to wholesome growth."<sup>1</sup>

It was this desire for security that was the basis of Makarenko's claim for "education in the community". As soon as they entered the colony the children were enrolled in one or other of the "regular detachments", which were in effect a community within the community, with one of their own age and similar upbringing—their commander—to put them wise to the traditions both of the detachment itself and of the community as a whole. In the early days they had common dormitories, but later at Kuriajh and the Dzerzhinski commune each detachment had its own separate quarters (the Russian word "palata" which is used in this connection is that also used to denote a hospital ward), and their own table in the dining-room. The members of a detachment were of different ages, and this, in fact, was the nearest some of them had ever got to being members of a family. As was seen in the account of the early days of the colony, Makarenko considered that his own principal duty was concerned with the improvement of their living conditions, and his unflagging zeal in this regard alone helped to ensure the respect, if nothing more, of the children, who are, as he said, little realists to a man. Their desire for security was based on their acceptance by the detachment and the community as a whole, and later on in the discussion of the "punch on the jaw" and Burun's trial it will be seen how Makarenko saw the influence of this desire on the general discipline of the colony. Their desire for adventure, for new experience, was directed to the constructive work for which their detachment was responsible, and for which, as members of it, they gained the credit.

In an interesting account of a visit to Kuriajh in the early part of 1927, G. S. Makarenko—at that time she was an inspector of

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Susan Isaacs, "Notes of Evidence to Curtis Commission", *New Era*, vol. xvii, No. 9, November, 1946.

children's homes for the Ukraine Ministry of Education, and later became Makarenko's wife—shows how this spirit of adventure was welcomed by the principal. After a dance in the evening the visitors were being escorted to their sleeping-quarters when they were accosted by a "guard", complete with rifle and a couple of dogs.

"The principal introduced him as Misha Charski—the leader of the guard. The torch flashed again, and Misha said:

" 'I wondered who it was coming round the corner. The dogs knew, you see. This afternoon they picked up a rather suspicious-looking character around here, and it's so dark to-night that you can understand that I was a bit worried. I strengthened the guard and then decided to come out myself to make sure.'

"As we walked on Makarenko grumbled to himself: 'In spite of what he says, nobody could get in, dogs or no dogs. If they were proper dogs it would be a different matter, but these are only village "brovki". And to hear them talk, you would think that they were wolfhounds at least. And no suspicious-looking characters have been anywhere near the place. All that is just fantasy, and Misha and his guard imagine themselves as heroes and beseech the fates to send them something exciting.'

"Someone remarked: 'Well, I for one feel grateful for Misha's fantasy.'

"Makarenko laughed. 'At any rate, we are sure of a quiet night. Here is another instance. When we came here first we planted an apple orchard. In the colony now they talk of little else but the orchards and the gardens. 'To look after your own orchard is far more pleasant and interesting than climbing about in other people's and stealing apples. But the motive behind it is essentially the same. It's not a question of a few apples. They want to live, to deepen their impressions, to train themselves for life. If there is no danger, then they play at danger.'"<sup>1</sup>

The essential point in all this is not so much that children see life as an adventure, but that the teacher has to present each

<sup>1</sup>G. S. Makarenko, "Reminiscences", *Sov. Ped.*, No. 11-12, 1943.

new task, each new demand, as something dangerous, something which calls out the best of which they are capable. In this way such an apparently ordinary matter as the collection of firewood for the winter is carried out with the same sense of excitement and responsibility as the "conquest of Kuriajh". This was what Makarenko probably meant by his curious phrase "the system of perspective lines".

"No man can live without the prospect of to-morrow's happiness. . . . In educational technique this happiness of the morrow becomes one of the teacher's most important objectives. In the first place happiness itself must first be organized. . . . Then the simpler forms must be developed into the more complex, into forms of happiness with a wider human significance. Here we have a most interesting line, leading from the primitive satisfaction of a momentary fancy right up to the deepest emotions of duty and responsibility. . . . One could write a whole book of teaching method based on the organization of perspective lines such as these, the utilization of those already in existence, and the establishment of new and more worthy ambitions. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

How Makarenko took conscious advantage of it is shown by an incident in the early days of the Dzerzhinski commune:

"Already in '31 the commune had built its first factory for the manufacture of electric drills. The long, brightly decorated hall, with its portraits on the walls and its flowers in the windows, was full of the most cunning machinery: 'Wanderers', 'Samson Werke', 'Hildemeister', 'Reinecke', and 'Marat' lathes and milling machines. The pupils were as busy as ever they had been, but instead of making pairs of trousers or iron bedsteads, they were turning out the most complicated machine tools, with hundreds of intricate details, and governed by subtle mathematical laws.

<sup>1</sup>This sense of the adventure of life is akin to the more aesthetic sense of "delight" mentioned by C. F. Montague in *Disenchantment*: "The right education, if we could find it, would work up this creative faculty of delight into all its branching possibilities of knowledge, wisdom, and nobility. . . ."

"These mathematical laws excited the same feelings of wonder and adventure in the mind of the community as the fields of beetroot, the pedigree cows, 'Vassily Vassillitch' (a famous stallion of the Trepke period) and 'The Heroes' had in former days.

"When we brought the first F.D.Z. drill from the assembly shop and laid it on the testing bench, and Vaska Alexieff, long since grown up, switched on the current and stood back, the silent group of engineers, pupils, and fellow-workers bent their heads and listened attentively to the low hum, but Gobunoff, the chief engineer, muttered gloomily:

" 'She's sparking. . . . '

" 'Damn the thing, so it is,' said Vaska.

"Hiding their chagrin under a smile, they took the machine back to the shop and worked on it for three whole days, taking it apart, testing the components, working out the square roots and logarithms, and rustling the blue-prints and detailed drawings. The dividers stepped over the design again, the accurate Kelenburger miller took off another half-thou., the girls' quick fingers rewound the intricate armature, and the sensitive minds of the children awaited the next trial.

"Three days later the F.D.Z. was laid on the testing bench once again, and once again twenty or more heads were bent anxiously over it, and once again Gobunoff, the chief engineer, muttered gloomily:

" 'She's sparking.'

" 'It's no good, she still sparks,' said Vaska Alexieff.

" 'The American didn't spark,' recalled Gobunoff.

" 'No,' agreed Vaska.

" 'No, of course not,' said the lads, not knowing where to lay the blame: on themselves, on the machines, on the rather doubtful No. 4 steel they were using, on the girls who wound the armatures, or on Engineer Gobunoff.

"A moment or two later red-haired, freckled Timka Odariuk came up on tiptoes out of the crowd of children and said very quietly, closing his eyes and blushing a little:

"'But the American did spark!'

"'How do you know?'

"'I saw it! I remember how the sparks shot out. And they are bound to spark with the vent arranged like that.'

"'Nobody took any notice of Timka, however, and again they took the drill back to the shop and worked their brains, nerves, and lathes on it. The general atmosphere was clearly rising, and the uneasiness was evident in the dormitories, clubs, and even in the classrooms. Quite a number were inclined to side with Odariuk.

"'Ours is a bit loose, because it is our first machine, but the American sparked even worse than that.'

"'No, it didn't.'

"'Yes, it did!'

"'No, it didn't!'

"'I tell you it did!'

"'At length our nerves were so much on edge that we sent an urgent message to Moscow: 'Send us down a "Black and Decker".'

"'They sent one down about a week later, and the American drill was brought into the commune and set up on the testing bench. There were perhaps a couple of dozen heads bent over the machine, but every one of the 300 or so children in the commune shared their anxiety. The white-faced Vaska switched the current on again, and we all held our breath. Then against the background of the low hum from the machine Odariuk said in an unexpectedly loud voice:

"'There you are! What did I tell you?'

"'At that moment the whole commune breathed one vast sigh of relief, and the wrinkles of worry were replaced by smiles of joy and triumph.

"'Old Timka was right after all,' we said happily.

"'The excitement of those early days has long been forgotten, because long ago the drills have been coming out at the rate of fifty or more a day, and have long ago ceased to spark. . . . We

have forgotten all about this, simply because we have other cares and other excitements. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Another instance occurred in the early period of the Gorki colony. One winter Sunday Makarenko took some of the lads for a walk, partly for exercise and partly to have a look at some wood they had been promised for fuel, which lay in the forest on the other side of the Kolomak river. After inspecting their firewood they found themselves among the ruins of the Trepke manor house, and Makarenko began to speculate aloud on how these buildings could be adapted for use as the nucleus of a better colony. The lads took the idea up with some enthusiasm, and in the dormitory that evening a brisk debate started up.

"Yekaterina Grigorievna (the senior female assistant) tried to pour cold water on our plans. . . .

" 'You know, boys, it's wrong to deceive yourselves with impossible dreams like this. That isn't the Bolshevik way.'

"Everybody shut up at once, but I looked angrily at Yekaterina Grigorievna and striking the table with my fist, shouted:

" 'Let me tell you this; in a month's time that property will be ours! Is that the Bolshevik way?'

"The lads all burst out laughing and shouted 'Hooray!' Both Yekaterina Grigorievna and I were bound to smile."

A week later, when Makarenko was showing the lads the order for the transfer of the property to the Gorki colony, Yekaterina Grigorievna entered the dormitory, and Shelaputin, one of the younger lads, went up to her and pointing to the order, said:

" 'Now, what do you think of that? Is that the Bolshevik way?' "<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Poem*, p. 626.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 45.



## CHAPTER VII

### "THE BOLSHEVIK WAY"

THIS idiomatic Russian phrase "pa-bolshevitskomu" (the Bolshevik way) sums up in a most striking manner both the theoretical and practical aspects of Makarenko's work as a teacher. As the chief education officer of the Poltava authority remarked when the Gorki colony was first proposed: "The important thing is, we don't want just another home for juvenile delinquents like the old ones, but, if you understand me, some kind of socialist education. We need people like that—our people." The problem had two aspects. On the one hand there was the general question of educating the rising generation in the new social and political ideas, and on the other the more particular problem of training recruits for the Party, or at any rate of keeping an eye on suitable material for future training. What had happened was that the revolution had virtually eliminated the old aristocracy, and with it a large proportion of the middle classes who had formerly run the civil service and occupied the leading positions in trade and industry. It says something for the intellectual courage of the Russians that they could see in the Gorki and Dzerzhinski bisprizornie their future leaders. Not that they had much choice in the matter; the need was so pressing that they had to utilize even the most unpromising material. That was one reason why Makarenko was so keen on organizing a Komsomol (Young Communist League) cell in the early days of the Gorki colony. The system of Pioneer groups and later Komsomols is, in fact, the main source of recruitment for Party membership, and through this, for the leaders in all branches of national life, government, civil service, trade, industry, and the armed forces.

The unfortunate thing is that this organization should be

known as a party at all, for it bears only the slightest resemblance to the political parties in any other country. In the Western democracies, if the term may be allowed, such as France, the United States, and Great Britain, every citizen is entitled to choose his political party from those available at the time, or even invent one for himself. Indeed it is usually considered his duty as a citizen to do so. He attends one or two meetings of the party of his choice, reads, shall we say, the *News Chronicle*, and then pays a visit to the local party secretary and says:

"I've been thinking about joining the Liberal party. I read the *Chronicle* and I like this chap Clement Davies very much."

The secretary gives him a form to sign, he pays his half-crown or fiver as the case may be, and from that time forward he considers himself a member of the Liberal party.

In Russia it is rather different. Suppose, for example, a hitherto non-attached citizen calls on the local secretary in the same way.

"I've been thinking lately about joining your party. I read *Izvestia* occasionally and I like this chap Stalin very much. And Molotov."

The party secretary would probably reply with "Noo?" (the Russian equivalent of "sez you!") and that would be about as far as the aspirant would be likely to get.

In general, as far as I can gather, in order to become a member of the Party one has to start somewhere around the age of eight, by being accepted by a group of Pioneers. This organization, which has a uniform and organization something like that of our Wolf-cubs and Brownies, starts the youngsters on a long journey of physical, social, and above all political education. In the Komsomol organization, the next stage in the process, to which the child graduates at the age of fourteen to sixteen, this political education takes the practical form of taking the chair at meetings, acting as secretary of various types of voluntary movements connected with schools, sport, and so on, and the more promising speakers and organizers are marked down

for further promotion and later invited to join the Party proper.

Here there is a more or less prolonged probationary period as candidate, before the approved citizen is finally given his party ticket, which may be revoked at any time in case of misconduct. In other words, instead of the citizen choosing his party, as in western Europe, in Russia the Party very largely chooses you.

We are perhaps inclined to be a trifle amused, or even shocked, at the idea of political education for children. The main reason for this, of course, is the simple fact that in this country and western Europe generally there is no generally accepted body of political doctrine which we could even attempt to instil into the mind of youth. It is true that in our history and civics lessons we teach what might be termed the mechanics of democracy; who votes and how; but it would be outside any teacher's province to indicate whom to vote for and why. Consequently we leave such education very largely to chance, and spend most of our time bemoaning the ignorance, and above all the indifference, of the great majority of our young people to matters of public moment. In Russia, however, rightly or wrongly, there is such a settled body of doctrine, and the powers that be lose no time in bringing it to the notice of the young citizen of the future.

In every Russian school, from the primary school right up to the technical colleges, at least one member of the staff, known as the "zampolit" or political supervisor, takes social and political theory as a subject. They give set lessons on the history of Communism and the theory of Marxism, keep an eye on the Pioneer or Komsomol organizations in the school itself, and sometimes do a certain amount of straight history on the side. The teachers' training colleges have separate departments for political subjects, which are usually given the precedence, at any rate in the advertisements, if not in salaries. I have one such advertisement before me now, taken at random from a recent issue of the *Teachers' Gazette*. "The Gorki State Pedagogical (Teachers' Training) Institute invites candidates for the

following professorships: Marxism-Leninism, political economy, history of the U.S.S.R., Russian language, Russian literature, physical geography, economic geography, botany, mathematics, general physics and theoretical physics." It goes without saying that these courses in Marxism-Leninism and political theory are, with Russian language and literature, obligatory on all teachers who pass through the colleges.

This subject, or group of subjects, both in prestige and in the time taken over it, obviously occupies a parallel position to that of religious knowledge in our schools and colleges, but before we begin to register our disgust at this, we must remember that the Communist state, by its very nature, must adopt some such conscious method of training the rising generation in its own mode of thought. What gives this somewhat unwieldy apparatus a rather sinister appearance to us is the suspicion that it means a cast-iron dictatorship over opinion. So it does, in a way, and for that reason it would hardly suit us, but here the religious analogy is again rather suggestive. In our country the quiet, inoffensive man who attends the little chapel round the corner is probably a Fundamentalist, basing his whole life, or sincerely trying to, on the Bible, as the sole arbiter of conduct. The vicar of the parish, however, has probably read, and not always forgotten, his Plato and Plotinus, while his dissenting colleague is not unacquainted with Kierkegaard and Schopenhauer, and the divinity professors in the universities and the higher ranks of the Roman Catholic hierarchy are, or were, notorious for their esoteric opinions. In the same way the higher you go in the ranks of the Marxian apologists the more likely you are to find, if not political freethinking, at any rate informed opinion. It is inconceivable, and human nature being what it is, impossible, that a man who has read a lot of Marx should have read nothing else. So that when we say that the Russians think this or that, we must be careful to make sure which Russians we are talking about.

To return to Makarenko, there is in one case an actual reference in the *Poem of Education* to a Gorki lad, one Kudlati,

escaping what Makarenko calls the obscure fate of a petty Ukrainian farmer and being finally accepted as a Party member, and it is probable that this was by no means an isolated instance.<sup>1</sup> Others became doctors, engineers, chauffeurs, teachers, agricultural specialists and airline pilots, while one of Makarenko's most difficult pupils of the early Gorki days, S. A. Kalabalin, whose exploits are told in the episode "Simeon's Punishment", under the pseudonym of Karabanoff, carried on Makarenko's work in another colony, after marrying a girl from Chernigoff whom he met at the Rabfak. During the war Kalabalin volunteered for the front line and was decorated with the "Fatherland War" medal. Another former Kuriajh pupil, Mikhail Bondarenko, received the order "Hero of the Soviet Union" (practically equivalent to our V.C.) and others were decorated for service as pilots and officers.

Makarenko also realized that in addition to the psychological benefits which the revolution brought in its train, the actual economic system under the new régime was working in his favour all the time. In other words, there were no vested interests standing in the way of his adoption of any kind of industrial production he cared to undertake. In the early days of the Gorki colony, long before the transfer to Trepke was thought of, Golovan, the local blacksmith, attached himself to the colony in the capacity of instructor to the boys, and soon the smithy was the busiest place in the whole colony, not only helping in the repairs at Trepke, but also doing a good deal of work for the local peasants, shoeing their horses, repairing ploughs and other implements, and so on. Golovan wanted to enlarge the scope of the work to include vehicle repairs, and invited a friend of his over from one of the local farms.

"Kozir was at least forty, and crossed himself on every conceivable occasion; but he was quiet and polite, and always had a pleasant smile on his face. Kozir was a wheelwright, and was curiously happy at the idea of making a set of wheels for us.

<sup>1</sup>Makarenko mentions four others in the epilogue to the *Poem*.

He had only just been released from the lunatic asylum, and went about in fear and terror of his wife, who had been mainly responsible for the incorrect diagnosis of the district psychiatrist. His peculiar domestic arrangements and the call of ambition induced him to make the following business proposition:

"'You know, comrades, God be praised (crossing himself), here am I—an old man—do you know what I should like to suggest? I should like to come here and live with you.'

"'But we've no place to put you.'

"'That doesn't matter, you needn't worry about that. I'll find somewhere, and the Lord (crossing himself again) will provide. It's summer now, but when the winter comes I can get one or two things together and build a little shack for myself at the back of the barn. I'm a good builder.'

"'All right. You can stay if you like.'

"Kozir crossed himself again, and began to enlarge the terms of his proposition:

"'We've managed to get some felloes for the wheels we want. This chap Kalina Ivannitch doesn't know anything about wheels, but I do. They will bring them themselves, the peasants, you see, and the Lord will provide.'

"'But we shan't want any more, uncle.'

"'What do you mean—we shan't want any more? God be praised, we don't want any more, but others will; what can a man do without wheels? You can sell them—and you will be making some money, and all for the good of the boys.'

"Kalina Ivannitch laughed, and supported Kozir's plea.

"'I'm damned if he isn't right! Let him stay.'

"Kozir soon made himself liked by the colonists. They regarded his religion as just one aspect of his weakness of mind, painful enough for those who happened to suffer from it, but in no way affecting those around him, and in spite of its unfavourable environment, the wheelwright's shop soon proved its worth. Kozir, with the help of his signs of the cross, was able to turn out some really creditable work, and without any

fuss at all the felloes and spokes were brought to him and we soon began to make money over it. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

When the property at Trepke was finally taken over the carpenters', wheelwrights', and smiths' shops were enlarged, and the mill also came under the jurisdiction of the colony, grinding the corn both for the colony itself and for the neighbouring peasants and kulaks. Later on at Kuriajh, as has already been mentioned, the carpenters and joiners made furniture, patent beehives, comb-boxes and other agricultural gear for sale to the villagers, and in conjunction with the shops ran a sawmill and timber-seasoning sheds. The culmination of this idea of "education through work" came with the setting up of the two factories in the Dzerzhinski commune for the manufacture on a commercial basis of electric drills and cameras. It would not be impossible, of course, to do things like this under an economic system governed largely by private enterprise, but it would be very difficult. During the war some technical schools both here and in the United States made parts for munitions, but in normal times all sorts of obstacles would be put in the way by interested parties, and a large part of the teacher's time and energy would be dissipated in attempting to justify it. In Russia the whole thing seems to be taken as a matter of course; nobody's corns are being trodden on; the work is there to be done, and if the children can do it, so much the better. Another great advantage was that as soon as production got into its stride, the colony or commune would be virtually self-supporting, and there would be no question of appealing to charity, even if there were such a thing, with the consequence that Makarenko could please himself about what he did in the institution and how he did it.

As was seen from the speech of "Professor Chaikin" at the investigation of Makarenko's work at Kuriajh, the objection of the powers-that-be to the productive work of the colonists was based not so much on economic grounds, that they would be

<sup>1</sup>*Poem*, p. 53.

undercutting private enterprise, or putting tradesmen out of employment (neither of these points would have any validity in the Soviet state), but on what was to Makarenko the perfectly natural corollary, that of paying the children wages for the work they did. What made it worse in the "professor's" eyes was that the children were not paid equally, but in proportion to the value of their contribution. Here Makarenko was in front of his time; it was not till several years later that the Stakhanovite movement and similar incentives to production were applied wholesale to Soviet industry.

The main attraction for Makarenko in all this was not so much the theoretical educational value of work as such, although he had a good deal to say on this topic at one time or another. He points out in one passage, in dealing with education in the family, that industry and ability to work hard at a set task are not as a rule given by nature, but must be trained, and that this training is best started in early years. Furthermore, in contrast to work under the old system, when the great majority were forced to work if they did not want to die of cold and hunger, "in our Soviet land all work becomes creative work, since its principal object is the physical and cultural enrichment of society as a whole". Under these conditions work becomes an adventure instead of a burden and a weariness to the flesh. It also had great importance for him from a moral point of view. "The accomplishment of joint tasks, mutual assistance and dependence on work of communal importance, these conditions alone make possible the creation of really effective moral relations between the separate members of a community." In addition to this, work had for him tremendous significance in developing individuality, in establishing and broadening self-confidence and the feeling of personal satisfaction with a job well and truly done.

All these considerations, although perfectly sound in their own way, and capable of much more elaborate development than even Makarenko gives them, bear the strong impression,



in his case, of being very largely *ex post facto* arguments. The chief value of work of this type lay not so much in its moral or even spiritual advantages, but in the way it helped to solve the problems of organization. The main organizational unit in the colonies was not the "class", a more or less fortuitous assembly of children of the same age and approximately equal attainments, but the regular detachment, devoted to and responsible for certain jobs of work, work of obvious importance to the community, and work which had to be done, and done properly, for the community to survive. Every boy and girl in the colony was attached to a definite detachment, and answerable, with the other members of the group under the direction of their commander, for the way the work was carried out. If we compare this with the so-called "house system" in some of our schools, a system which originated under entirely different conditions (the residential "houses" in the public schools) to any which apply to the majority of the schools which have since adopted it, a system based as a rule on sport and having little real connection with any other aspect of school life, least of all with the work of the school as such, we can appreciate the immense incentive for real co-operation and *esprit de corps* which the Makarenko detachments provided. There is a very similar feeling among the different sorts of tradesmen in a factory, while in the R.A.F. the "clock-bashers" and the "chain gang" looked upon themselves, and quite rightly, as the cream of the force. What binds these little enclaves together is not rank or wage or importance, but the mere fact of doing the same sort of work. A further point was that the detachment commanders were more like assistant teachers than prefects, and this was of considerable help in solving the staffing problem. Each detachment had its duties and functions clearly marked out and its responsibilities defined, and late Makarenko was able to boast at Kuriajh:

"The general picture of my labours as a teacher began to show itself in new colours. Discipline and the improvement of

living conditions had long since ceased to be my sole care and preoccupation. All this was looked after by the traditions of the community, which was able to take far better care of them than I had been by continual rows and hysterics; it was done by a careful and unremitting attention to details, by what I might almost call a sort of communal instinct."

Lucy L. Wilson described this system of detachments at Kuriajh (she called them regiments), and added that the whole organization reminded her very much of the George Junior republics. She goes on to say that "there is here, however, much less political machinery and much more real self-rule by the children themselves. . . ." Actually she missed the essential difference between the two institutions. The George Junior republics, as their name implies, were organized on the lines of the adult republic; that is, they had their own President, Senate, House of Representatives, Chief Justice, District Attorney, and so on; in fact the whole system was a borrowed one and applied from the outside. Makarenko's detachments, on the other hand, arose more or less spontaneously from the actual needs of the colony; in other words the system developed gradually and inevitably from the conditions in the colony itself. It is true that in its final form it bore a close resemblance to the Russian system of local and regional Soviets, with the Komsomol taking the educational and policy-making role of the Party in the outside world, just as the George Junior republics resembled the political (and economic) system in the United States, but instead of being grafted on the life of the school in a purely arbitrary manner, the similarity arose from common needs and aspirations. Perhaps it is this as much as anything else which gives the George Junior republics a rather amateur appearance compared with the Gorki and Dzerzhinski colonies.

It may be objected that such a system of detachments is easily adapted to an industrial or agricultural colony such as those under Makarenko's direction, but that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to apply it to the usual school subjects. If that

is the case, so much the worse for school "subjects". The traditional—"idealist", in the Marxian sense—view of educators, that knowledge could be divided up into compartments labelled "history", "geography", "arithmetic", and so on, has been stereotyped in modern times by the system of mass-production in the primary schools; "teaching" a "subject" to a 'class' from "textbooks" was the only method available when the number of pupils exceeds that with which a conscientious teacher can deal individually. It is interesting to note that the working detachments in the Dzerzhinski commune ranged in numbers from ten to fifteen; about the same number as a cricket or football team. It is perhaps curious, but by no means accidental, that the traditional "team" for sporting purposes has crystallized round a number of this order. (There were also, of course, twelve Apostles.) Such a group is large enough to develop the feeling of comradeship, but is not so large as to obscure the individual members.

This criticism of the idea of "subjects" is of course a commonplace of recent educational literature (cf. Herbert Read below), and is the basis of the numerous "projects" which are receiving so much publicity these days. In the staff room the other day I picked up a book that one of my colleagues laid down, and just glanced casually at the introduction. I have forgotten the name of the book or its author, but the opening words caught my eye: "After twenty years of teaching history, I have come to the conclusion that history is not a subject." It is not altogether a question of numbers, however. Things like music and P.T. are all the better for large numbers, up to a certain point the more the merrier. With things like arithmetic or geography or history, however, it is more a matter of the level of attainment; arithmetic is only a subject to an honours graduate in mathematics, geography to a master mariner, and history to a member of Parliament. To the child, and we are all children in this sense in relation to some branch of knowledge or other, they are interwoven with the texture of life itself, and in consequence are

best taught in this manner. Makarenko's boys in charge of the piggeries had to mix the feed in the proper proportions, draw graphs of weight, etc., write reports of progress, and in addition picked up a good deal of practical biology and hygiene, while the carpenters making wooden beehives would not get far with the roofs without knowing a certain amount of geometry. A student can become acquainted with geometry from textbooks, but the best way to "learn" it is to cut the bevels for the rafters, hips, and purlins in an actual roof, or set out the winders for a staircase.

It is hardly necessary to point out that the activities of the Gorki and Dzerzhinski workshops were in no sense vocational or technical training. The best way to look at them would be to consider them as an extension—and a perfectly logical extension—of handicraft teaching as we understand it here. It so happens that handicrafts is not on the time-table of the Russian elementary or secondary schools, but a certain amount is carried on in "kruzhki" (circles), what we should call clubs, outside school hours. According to a recent article in *Soviet Education* the school workshops were "liquidated" in 1937, and although the reason for this drastic step was not given, it no doubt had something to do with difficulties of staffing and equipment.

During the war similar factories to that at the Dzerzhinski commune were organized in various parts of Russia, particularly in Moscow itself, where they appear to have been run somewhat on the lines of our old handicraft "centres"; i.e. several schools sent their pupils in turn to a single workshop or factory. Some of the more enterprising Russian educationists, influenced by the successful work which these schools did during the war, have recently been asking that the whole question of handicraft teaching in the general elementary and secondary schools should be reconsidered. The general background of these discussions on the future of handicraft, which have been going on for some time, has been the question of what the Russians call "poly-technical" education. The ball was set rolling by an article by S. M. Shabaloff in *Soviet Pedagogy*, No. 9, September, 1945,

entitled "The Content of Polytechnical Education". The first thing which occurs to us when this word is used is something on the lines of the Regent Street Polytechnic, or the famous *École Polytechnique* in France. In the course of a short correspondence with Mr. Shabaloff on this topic about two years ago, he asked me to give him some detailed information about the various Polytechnics in London and the provinces, but it now appears that this was not quite what he had in mind. The word polytechnic is, in fact, an example of what "Félix de Grand' Combe"<sup>1</sup> calls "les faux-amis". What the Russian educationists are concerned with here is something more general than our notion. They have been wondering whether, in a modern industrialized state like Soviet Russia, where technology of various kinds is the corner-stone of national life, the content of education could or should be modified to allow of greater stress on technical subjects, in a word, given a "polytechnical" bias. In this discussion there are also echoes of the wider controversy between a liberal education—or training for life—and vocational training—or education for making a living—a controversy which still exercises the minds of many educationists here in western Europe and the U.S.A.

Since the publication of Mr. Shabaloff's article a number of other leading Soviet educational writers have entered the fray, and in a recent number of *Soviet Pedagogics* (June, 1946) M. N. Shatkin surveys the whole problem in an article entitled "Polytechnical Education in the Elementary Schools". This article is particularly important as it gives a summary of hitherto unpublished material prepared by the Teaching Methods Committee of the Ministry of Education of the R.S.F.S.R. In other words, this is "inside dope".

The Committee appear to have come down very strongly in favour of this "polytechnicalization"<sup>2</sup> of the elementary schools,

<sup>1</sup>"Tu viens en Angleterre."

<sup>2</sup>I have used this word, which occurs in the article quoted, and at which Sir Alan Herbert, if he ever saw it, would be duly horrified, mainly to show that the Russians are also rather prone to this sort of thing.

and among their principal recommendations are the re-establishment of school workshops and gardens, the inclusion of handicraft in the school time-table, and the development of factory work for the older pupils. It is interesting to note that the Committee, in regard to the financial arrangements for these reforms, suggest that the Government grants should be equal to the sums furnished by the local authorities, parents' associations, etc. Whether this is a usual feature of Soviet educational finance I am unable to judge, but the stressing of local initiative is interesting.

As has already been pointed out, the factories of the Dzerzhinski commune founded by Makarenko, which were almost completely destroyed by the Germans during their occupation of the Ukraine, have been partly repaired and production resumed. According to a lecture on Soviet Education by Dr. Nicholas Hans at the School of Slavonic Studies last May:

"... It can now be said that the combination of learning with production was one of the major achievements of Soviet education... Learning became an inseparable part of practical work, and the experience of industry or agriculture thus acquired made a valuable contribution to general social education."<sup>1</sup>

Makarenko may justly be considered as one of the pioneers in this movement, and it was one of the many ways in which he took advantage of the conditions round him and led the way for others to follow.

With regard to the general question of the employment of children in industry, there is an interesting and unexpected passage in Herbert Read's book *Education through Art*. Speaking of the curriculum, he says:

"But to return to the main contention of this chapter: the curriculum should not be conceived as a collection of subjects. At the secondary stage as at the primary stage, it should be a field of creative activities, with instruction as incidental or instrumental to the aim of these activities. If at the infant stage

<sup>1</sup>*The Times Educational Supplement*, 8th June, 1946.

these activities may be described as *play* activities, and at the primary stage as *projects*, then at the secondary stage they merge into constructive *works*."

Then follows his note, which is itself a quotation, but which I quote in full as it covers the ground in a most remarkable way:

"This suggestion has the very welcome support of Mr. J. A. Lauwerys in an article contributed to *The New Era* (vol. xxii, pp. 200-6, 1941): 'It might be wise to return to the principles of the Fisher Act, the chief objection to which was that it was born before its time. Would it be possible to lead adolescents gradually into gainful occupation, e.g. could they do two hours' remunerative work at thirteen, four hours at sixteen, six hours at eighteen? The advantages of such a scheme are even more obvious than its difficulties, which are chiefly organizational in kind, and thus fairly easily overcome. Control would remain with the Educational Authority, not with the employer, and any money earned should be spent for the benefit of the children.' Mr. Lauwerys adds a footnote with a surprising but very apposite quotation from Karl Marx (*Capital*, vol. i, Part 4, Chapter XIII): 'If the element of exploitation could be removed from it, child labour ought to become an essential part of education. "As we can learn in detail from a study of the life of Robert Owen, the germs of the education of the future are to be found in the factory system. This will be an education which, in the case of every child over a certain age, will combine productive labour with instruction and physical culture, not only as a means for increasing social production, but as the only way of producing fully developed human beings."'<sup>1</sup> Herbert Read goes on to note: 'It will be remembered that Bernard Shaw came to a similar conclusion in "Parents and Children" (the Preface to *Misalliance*): "There is every reason why a child should not be allowed to work for commercial profit or for the

<sup>1</sup>It is interesting to note that Mr. Shatkin, in the article quoted above on "Polytechnical Education", quotes this identical passage from Marx, together with similar passages from Lenin and Krupskaya.

support of its parents at the expense of its own future; but there is no reason whatever why a child should not do some work for its own sake and that of the community if it can be shown that both it and the community will be the better for it. Productive work for children has the advantage that its discipline is the discipline of impersonal necessity. The eagerness of children in our industrial districts to escape from school to the factory is not caused by lighter tasks or shorter hours in the factory, nor altogether by the temptation of wages, nor even the desire for novelty, but by the dignity of adult work, the exchange of the humiliating liability to personal assault from the lawless school-master, from which grown-ups are free, for the stern but dignified pressure of necessity to which all flesh is subject.' "

It is impossible to say from Mr. Lauwery's article, which I have since read in full, whether he was acquainted with the work of Makarenko or not, but it seems unlikely that Herbert Read was, or he would not have been so surprised at the quotation from Karl Marx. It is certain that Makarenko, without making too much fuss about it, based his idea on that of Marx, which has since been further elaborated by Lenin. In this matter he was simply taking advantage of his time and place. The fact that he was working within a socialist economic system disposed of the main objection to this kind of work noted by Marx and Shaw, the exploitation of the child's labour for commercial profit, and the question of control as between employer and Education Authority mentioned by Mr. Lauwerys did not arise. Since the agitation against child labour which began about a hundred years ago and has since brought forth a series of Factory Acts, the tendency has been to discourage the employment of children at all, and rightly so, bearing in mind the conditions of capitalist industry which prevailed at the time and which are still present in some measure even to-day. But since these conditions have been gradually ameliorated by improvements in the factories themselves, and the rise of a large measure of non-commercial production, the question naturally arises



whether this tendency has not gone too far. What is certain is that under proper safeguards the remunerative employment of children in production has very strong arguments in its favour from an educational point of view, and that is after all what we are chiefly concerned with here.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SCHOOL FOR LIFE

MAKARENKO also realized that his community, if successful, would act as a rallying point among the surrounding peasantry for the new ideas in political thought, agricultural technique, and the new attitude to society. One of the first "exploits" of the original Gorki colony at Poltava was their campaign against illicit vodka distilling by the kulaks and the peasants themselves. This campaign was undertaken with the principal object of stopping drunkenness in the colony itself, and also of giving the lads something to do and think about, but it had further consequences than this, and undoubtedly assisted in enhancing the feeling of respect for the colony and the new ideas which lay behind it. Their first expedition resulted in the destruction of half a dozen illicit stills and the confiscation of a large quantity of liquor, and although they met with considerable opposition from the "moonshiners" themselves, most of the peasants were on their side.

"Our expedition was a great success. The following day Zadoroff told some of our clients behind the smithy:

" 'Next Sunday we are going out again and we'll get some more of them. The whole colony is coming out, about fifty of us.'

"The villagers stroked their beards reflectively, and agreed with our point of view:

" 'That's right. They're wasting the grain with their distilling, and after all, it's illegal. You're quite right.' "

Later on at Trepke Makarenko was very fond of referring to the mill, where the villagers brought their grain to be ground and incidentally gossip with the miller and his assistants, as the colony's "Narkomindel", i.e. Department of Foreign Affairs.

"The acquisition of the mill was a great step forward for us.

It not only paid well for the grinding—four fuints for every pood of grain (four pounds in every forty)—but also gave us large quantities of bran, the most valuable ingredient in feeding-stuffs for our stock.

“The mill had another very important aspect; it put us on an entirely new footing with the surrounding villages, and forced us to take part willy-nilly in local politics. The mill was in effect the Foreign Office of the colony. It was impossible to set foot inside it without enmeshing oneself in the day-to-day quarrels and controversies of the peasantry and the kulaks. Every village had its chairman of the Poor Peasants’ Committee, usually active and well-informed men; there were also a number of ‘middle-class’ farmers, dry, round, and hard, like their own peas, and, like peas, continually struggling and pushing one against the other; and finally there were the ‘bosses’, the kulaks, waging a losing battle from their farm-redoubts, and nursing old and long-remembered grievances against the new order.

“As soon as we took over the mill we announced that we preferred to do business with communities as a whole and would always give them precedence in case the question arose. We always asked them to produce their documents from the community before dealing with customers. The poorer peasants were easily persuaded to join one of these collective groups, and always came in good time, paid up quickly without argument, and with them the work of the mill went like clockwork. The ‘bosses’ formed a small but distinct group of their own, closely bound together by family ties and common interests. They managed their business in a competent and quiet way, and often it was hard to tell who was, in fact, the senior among them.

“When, however, a crowd of ‘middle-class’ farmers came to the mill, the work of the colonists was turned into sheer drudgery. They never came together, and we would be messing about all day waiting for them. They had their representative in the same way as the groups of poorer peasants, but as a rule he gave us his own grain to mill first, and then usually made his

way homewards, leaving behind an excited crowd of suspicious and angry farmers. Having lunched—usually on their journey—on illicit vodka, our clients often took this opportunity to settle a few old scores between themselves, and from clients they were transformed into patients of Yekaterina Grigorievna's advanced dressing-station, whither they were carried by the furious colonists. Osadchi, the commander of the 9th detachment which ran the mill, often complained to Yekaterina Grigorievna about her little hospital:

"What do they bring them here for? Why should you bother to patch them up? You don't know these ruddy yokels. As soon as you put them right, they go out and start knifing one another again. Leave them to us, we'll cure them. It would be a lot better if they paid more attention to what was going on in the mill!"

"But our tone was soon established in the mill as well; it was pretty lively at times, but at length discipline, on velvet paws, carefully and quietly took charge of these disturbers of the peace.

"In June we took part in the election for the village Soviet. Luka Simeonovitch (a local kulak and a determined enemy of the colony) and his friends had to beat a retreat, and the chairman's place was taken by Pavl Pavlovitch Nicolaienko, while one of our colonists, Dennis Kudlati (that same Kudlati who, as mentioned before, eventually became a member of the Party) was elected to the village Soviet."<sup>1</sup>

Pavl Pavlovitch Nicolaienko was the son of a local farmer, and was well known in the colony through his membership of the village Komsomol and also for his attachment to Olga Voronova, a former delinquent but now leader of the Gorki Komsomol herself and assistant agronom to Sherry. A few weeks later Pavl's parents, as was the custom, sent two "matchmakers" into the colony to discuss with Makarenko the forthcoming marriage of these two young people, the arrangements for

<sup>1</sup>*Poem*, p. 205.

the dowry, etc. Makarenko assured them that although he was, from the legal point of view, the girl's guardian, all they had to do was ask Olga herself; with regard to dowry, they would have to have a Soviet of Commanders on that. The matchmakers were eager enough to "fall in with the new customs" as they put it, so the Soviet of Commanders was summoned to discuss the matter with them. As was usual in questions of such importance, the Soviet of Commanders was in effect a general meeting of the whole colony, and practically everybody had a share in the debate. The first snag was that the matchmakers, instructed by the young man's parents, insisted on a church wedding in the village. This was turned down flat by Olga herself; as a Komsomol member, she could hardly be expected to agree to such a proposal. The next objection was with regard to the proposed arrangement of the young couple's household; the parents had suggested that Olga and Pavl would have to live with them and share their cottage, although Pavl, as the eldest son, was entitled by custom to a new house and a share of the father's land. The real reason for this parsimony was, of course, that since Olga was a pupil at the colony, and for all practical purposes a homeless orphan, she would be unable to bring any dowry with her. This roused Kalina Ivannitch:

"What's all this about? What are you moaning about? Is he some sort of Prince you are offering us? Do you think that because you and your Pavl Ivannitch (the lad's father) have built a clay hovel for yourselves, that you can turn your noses up at us? All he's worth, the parasite, is a table and a couple of wooden benches, and a leather coat to cover his nakedness, and you talk as if he were some millionaire!"

"Kuzma Petrovitch (one of the matchmakers) winced and squeaked:

"Don't go for us like that! We only spoke of the dowry, like."

"Do you know where you are bringing your Prince, or

don't you? This here is the Soviet government. Ever heard of the Soviet government? The Soviet government can give her such a dowry that your stinking grandfathers, if they could see it, would turn over in their graves three times!"

"The lads cheered and laughed at Kalina Ivannitch, but he went on to show that it was no laughing matter.

"Let the Soviet of Commanders decide the matter properly. The fact is, they have sent to make a match with us, and we have to make our minds up what we shall give with our daughter Olga in exchange for this half-starved Nicolaienko, who has only just realized that taters are dug with a fork and sows his turnips, the parasite, like corn. And we are rich, so we have to think carefully."

"The general expression of the Soviet and all present showed that they were all agreed on the magnitude of the problem. The matchmakers were asked to leave the room and the Soviet proceeded to the discussion of what to offer for Olga's dowry.

"The lads had been so excited by the foregoing debate that they began to suggest so much as to astonish themselves. At length Sherry was appealed to for his opinion, for they were afraid that he would protest against giving so much away, but without the slightest hesitation he said:

"You're quite right, all of you. Although it may cost us dearly, we must give Olga Voronova a good dowry, better than that of any other girl in the district. We have to teach these rustics a lesson."

"Consequently, during the discussion, if there were any argument at all, it usually went like this:

"What are you talking about—a foal! Give her a horse and foal."

"After nearly an hour's debate the matchmakers, who had been giving themselves a rest in the open air, were called in to receive the decision of the Soviet, and Kolka Vershnieff, not without some portentousness, delivered the following speech:

"The Soviet of Commanders hereby resolves: To give

Olga away to Pavl. That Pavl live in a separate cottage, and that his father give him some furniture and as much land as he can afford. No priests at the wedding, which must be held at a Registry Office. The first day of the wedding will be celebrated here by us, and if you wish, you may celebrate it down there in the village later. Olga's dowry to consist of:

" 'Pedigree Siemmental cow and calf.

" 'Mare and foal at foot.

" 'Five sheep.

" 'English pedigree pig. . . '

"Kolka grew quite hoarse reading out the list. It included household utensils, stock, seed, a quantity of provisions, clothing, bedding, furniture, and even a sewing machine. He concluded by saying:

" 'We promise to help Olga at any time we may be called upon, and they, in their turn, must help the colony if requested. We also give Pavl the title of honorary colonist.'

"The matchmakers blinked and their faces took on the expression of people assisting at a deathbed. Without bothering this time whether they were doing it right or not, the girls ran in and tied the napkins on the two old men, while the youngsters, with Toska at their head, brought in the bread and salt, also covered with a napkin. The nonplussed and embarrassed matchmakers took the bread and salt and looked round as if they hardly knew what to do with it. Toska took the plate from under Kuzma's arm and said cheerfully:

" 'Here! You can't have the plate as well; the miller gave us that . . . it's a special plate.'

At the subsequent wedding breakfast held in the courtyard of the colony the higher education of the local peasantry was continued:

"Two classrooms had been set apart for the exhibition of Olga's dowry and presents. The wedding guests crowded in and many indignant and envious old women pursed their lips as they looked at me. They had turned their noses up at our

girls and married their sons to the local farmers' daughters, and now it seemed as if they had been making a mistake. I could understand their feelings.

"Bokoff (a visitor from the education offices) remarked:

"What will you do if they send their matchmakers to you in droves?"

"I'm well insured. We have a surplus of young men. . . ."

"During the wedding breakfast Toska Solovieff and his friend Shelaputin entertained a villager with a straw-coloured beard, one of the guests on Pavl Ivannitch's list. It was his first visit to the colony, and he was amazed at it all.

"Tell me, lads, is it true that you run this place yourselves?"

"Yes, what about it?"

"But are you really the bosses?"

"Toska Solovieff leaned over and said:

"But didn't you know that sometimes we are bosses and sometimes just ordinary workers?"

"But what are you going to be, for example, when you grow up?"

"Oho!" said Toska, helping himself to a huge pie, "I'm going to be an engineer, according to Anton Simeonovitch [Makarenko], and Shelaputin here is going to be a pilot."

"He turned round to Shelaputin with an amused expression, because this was the first time either of them had ever heard anything of this ambition. Shelaputin nodded his head energetically:

"That's right. I'm going to be a pilot."

"Then you're not going to be a peasant?"

"Toska looked swiftly at his interlocutor.

"Why not? Only not this sort of peasant."

"What exactly do you mean—"not this sort of peasant"?"

"Well, not this sort of thing. We're going to have tractors. Ever seen a tractor?"

"No, never."

"We have. We saw one on one of the State farms, where



we sent some of our pigs. There's a tractor there, like some great beetle. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Later on at Kuriajh, according to Lucy L. Wilson, the colony possessed two tractors, one of which was the gift of the workers in a Kharkov tobacco factory (probably through the Komsomol). The pigs which Shelaputin spoke about were one of the star turns both at Trepke and at Kuriajh. They were accommodated in a model group of pigsties, and the detachment which looked after them were obliged by Sherry to keep a detailed check on their feed, condition, and so on. When they littered, which was pretty frequently, according to Makarenko, the colony kept one or two of the more healthy specimens, while the others were distributed gratis to the villagers. Sherry also initiated a six-year<sup>2</sup> rotation of crops on the farm belonging to the colony, which gave the villagers some idea of what scientific agriculture could do. For various historical reasons the medieval, or even prehistoric, system of strip cultivation was still common in the Ukraine and other parts of Russia at this time, and any system of crop rotation at all was virtually impossible, and the land was gradually losing its fertility. Organizations such as the Trepke and Kuriajh colonies were prototypes of the collective farms which were organized later to improve the food supply.

All this may seem on the face of it a wide digression from the main work of education, but to Makarenko these contacts with the outside world were an essential part of his technique, in that they showed his pupils the kind of problem they would meet and be called upon to solve when they finally left his tuition behind. As I have already pointed out, the principal task of education in Russia after the revolution may be summed up as the production of a new ruling class. In this country the classical and still widely prevalent view is that the leaders must be drawn from that class of society which can afford to send its children to the public schools, where the training for leadership

<sup>1</sup>*Poem*, pp. 319 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup>The standard system in Russia is now, I understand, a nine-year rotation.

takes the form of participation in various kinds of sport. The Russians train their leaders by giving them something practical to lead from the very beginning; all Russian schools appear to be hives of Pioneer groups, class Soviets, Komsomols, and other committees of various kinds, all run by the children, and in most cases it is difficult to judge where the work of the school ends and that of the Komsomol, for example, begins. A clue to a good deal of Makarenko's theory and practice lies in the fact that he took the children completely into his confidence with regard to what he wanted doing, and then stood aside and let them show what sort of a job they could make of it. He had arrived at the same conclusion with regard to educational work as Mary Parker Follet<sup>1</sup> had in her principles of business management: "The leader should make us feel our responsibility, not take it from us. Then he gets men whom it is worth while to lead." Not only that, but in the natural course of events he gets men who become leaders in their turn.

To give an example. As mentioned above, Makarenko died suddenly and unexpectedly in Moscow. His former pupils came from all over the Soviet Union to pay their last tribute to the memory of their beloved teacher. It is rather touching to read in Medynski's book that one of the first things they did was to elect a special "combined detachment", which proceeded forthwith to make all the arrangements for the funeral.

Not that it was all plain sailing by any means. I have already mentioned the opposition he received from certain members of the Ukraine Ministry of Education, based principally on theoretical and political grounds, which finally resulted in his resignation from Kuriajh and his transfer to full-time supervision of the Dzerzhinski commune run by the O.G.P.U. Apart from this criticism there was a good deal of official prejudice, inefficiency, red tape, and sometimes downright graft, as in the episode of the Trepke land. Makarenko could easily make allowances for the ignorance and superstition of the peasants—after all they were none of them more than two or

<sup>1</sup>Quoted by Lyndall Urwick in the *Listener*, 17th October, 1946.

three generations from a condition of serfdom; but his patience was often sorely tried by the shortsightedness and obstructive tactics of what he called the "pedagogical Olympus". One of the reasons why he got on so well with the men of the O.G.P.U. was that they were men after his own heart in their disdain of red tape and theory and their ability to get on with the job.

In the early days of the Gorki colony at Poltava he was very often definitely cold and hungry, though he characteristically passed it off more or less as a joke.

"There was one good feature in our soul-destroying poverty. We teachers were just as cold and hungry as the rest. We rarely received our salaries, and walked about in the same rags as the colonists. The whole of that winter I had no soles to my boots, and a piece of old cloth was always poking through. Yekaterina Grigorievna alone swaggered about in smart dresses, although even they were often altered, cleaned, and pressed."

As the colony grew he found it increasingly difficult to obtain suitable teachers. He was constantly on the search for what he called "nastoyashchiye liudi". This phrase is a very common one with him, but it is rather difficult to render into English. Literally it means "upstanding people", and reminds one of the parody of Housman:

What! Still alive at twenty-two?

A fine, upstanding chap like you?

These "real people", as it would be more usually translated, were hard to find. The first additions to the staff at Poltava—in addition to the original Yekaterina Grigorievna and Lydia Petrovna—were the Osipoffs, man and wife. Makarenko had made it the rule that the teacher on evening duty should spend his or her time with the children in the dormitory till "lights out". The rule was really unnecessary, as all the staff, whether on duty or not, were to be found there in the evening, as it was the only place where there was any warmth and comfort. But Ivan Ivannitch Osipoff refused to sit down on the children's beds, as was the custom; he said they were lousy. As there was

nowhere else to sit, he had to spend the whole of his turn of duty on his two flat feet, as Makarenko puts it. The Osipoffs were always complaining about the fleas they took away with them after an evening spent with the children, but this did not get much sympathy from him either:

“What we have to worry about is not the fleas you take away. Our trouble is dealing with those you leave behind!”

One of the female teachers who was appointed by the local authority seemed for a time to be extremely popular with some of the older lads and even with members of the staff, but Makarenko was always a trifle suspicious of her, and when one of the men complained that if she were not removed he would resign forthwith, Makarenko decided to send her packing. It turned out that till recently she had been one of the better-known ladies of the town.

On one occasion Makarenko was asked to address a conference of local teachers and education workers on the subject of discipline in children's homes and schools. The conference was held at a town some distance from the colony, and lasted for several days. On the evening of the first day Anton Bratchenko, the head of the stables detachment and general courier for the colony, dashed into the town with the news that a new-born child had been found dead in one of the girls' dormitories. Makarenko felt that his lecture for the following day had better be left undelivered, and returned immediately to the colony. He knew, of course, what had happened. One of the older girls had for some time been carrying on a liaison with a good-for-nothing fellow from Kharkov, the child had not been wanted from the beginning, and the mother had simply smothered it and hidden the body for the time being, hoping later to take it into the forest and dispose of it in some way. At the inquest and the subsequent trial the theory was put forward that she had done this in an accession of “maidenly shame”. The children were as openly sceptical of this as Makarenko was himself, but this explanation prevailed at the trial and the girl was

eventually returned to the colony. Later, however, she continued to be a bad influence over the other girls, and he had to get rid of her, finding her a job in a factory in the town. She was not one of his successes.

At one time he divided his colonists into four categories: the "tops", the "swamp", the "kids", and the "rabble". The first class need no further particularization; they were his leaders and the commanders of detachments. The "swamp" was composed of those lads and girls who had no definite characteristics one way or the other:

"It must be confessed, however, that every now and then the 'swamp' threw up an outstanding personality; generally speaking it was a temporary condition. We had at this time about fifteen 'kids'; they were considered by the older lads as the raw material, and their main function was to learn to blow their noses. As far as the 'kids' themselves were concerned, they felt no urge to do anything remarkable, but spent most of their time playing games: skating, boating, fishing, sledging, and other trivialities. Not that I blamed them for that.

"The 'rabble' consisted of five boys, including Perepelyatchenko, Evgeniev, Gustoivan, Galatenko, and one other whose name I have forgotten. They were relegated to this category by the general decision of the community, after it was established that each one of them had some outstanding vice: Galatenko, a glutton and good-for-nothing; Evgeniev, a hysterical chatterbox; Perepelyatchenko, a maggot, cry-baby, and cadger; and Gustoivan, a 'psychic', always praying to the Mother of God and dreaming of life in a monastery."

Such were some of the external conditions under which Makarenko and his pupils sought the better life through the "Bolshevik way". Both his and their attitude to such trials and difficulties may be appreciated from the motto which was hung up in a prominent place in the dining-room both at Trepké and Kuriajh, and became a catch-phrase in both colonies:

"Don't squeal!"

## CHAPTER IX

### MAKARENKO ON DISCIPLINE

THE first thing that usually occurs to the lay mind, or to the expert, for that matter, when the subject of schools and children's homes is under discussion is the question of discipline. Makarenko naturally had a good deal to say on this topic, and although what he said was neither very new nor very original, what is interesting is the way his mind worked with regard to it.

One of the most famous incidents in the early Gorki period was Zadoroff's "punch on the jaw". As was mentioned before, this occurred in the first months of the colony, just after one of the first half-dozen pupils had been taken away by the State police on a charge of robbery with violence and murder. Both Makarenko and his staff were at their wits' end, and were on the point of giving the whole thing up as a bad job. The story is best told, as usual, in his own words:

"One winter morning I suggested to Zadoroff that he go out and cut some firewood for the kitchen. I received the usual sardonic reply:

"'Go yourself. There's plenty there.'

"Angry and outraged, brought almost to despair by the accumulated wrongs and insults of the past few months, I lifted my fist and punched Zadoroff on the jaw. I hit him hard; he was unable to keep his feet and fell back on the stove. I hit him the second time, and catching him by the collar and pulling him towards me, I let him have it again.

"I could see at once that he was frightened. Deathly white, with trembling hands he hurriedly put his cap on, took it off, and put it on again. I would probably have hit him again, but he whispered:

"'I'm sorry, Anton Simeonovitch.'

"My anger was so wild and unreasoning that I felt: let one of them say just one word, and I would hurl myself at the whole lot of them, I would kill them, I would exterminate the crew of ruffians. I felt the iron poker in my hand. All five pupils stood motionless by their beds. Burun was hurriedly dressing himself.

"I turned to him and brought the iron poker down on the foot of the bed:

" 'Either you all go out at once into the forest and do some work, or you all clear out of the colony, and to hell with you! ' "

When Makarenko accompanied the lads to the shed and handed them the saws and hatchets he began to feel some doubts as to the wisdom of choosing that particular job with those particular tools, but much to his surprise it all went off quite well. Zadoroff appeared to be more amused than anything else over the whole affair. Later Makarenko remarked:

"The encounter with Zadoroff appeared to be the turning point as far as discipline was concerned. To be quite candid I had no qualms of conscience about it. True, I had struck one of my pupils. I was aware of the educational enormity and judicial illegality of my action, but at the same time I felt that the cleanness of my hands from a pedagogical point of view was of secondary importance compared to the problems that confronted me. . . . I was even determined to become a dictator, if that were the only course left open. . . .

"It is necessary to make clear at once that not for one moment did I consider violence a universal disciplinary method. The encounter with Zadoroff had affected me far more than it had him. I began to wonder what I should do if I met with the slightest resistance. From among the staff Lydia Petrovna was the first to pass judgment on me. That evening she put her chin on her hand and stared at me:

" 'So you've found the right method then? Like they do in the training colleges, eh? ' "

" 'That's quite enough, Lydia. ' "

"No, but tell me. Are we supposed to punch them on the jaw? Can I do it as well? Or is it only you?"

"My dear Lydia, I'll tell you later. At the moment I don't know myself. Wait a while."

"All right. I can wait."

"Yekaterina Grigorievna puckered her eyebrows at me for a few days, and addressed me with formal politeness. But five days later she asked me with a smile:

"Well? And how do you feel?"

"About the same, thank you. In fact I feel very well."

"But you know that all this has a most unfortunate side?"

"Unfortunate?"

"Yes. The unfortunate part about it is that the boys talk about you with rapture. Particularly Zadoroff. Why is that? I don't understand it at all. Is it a hankering after slavery?"

"I thought for a moment and replied:

"No. I don't think that slavery has anything to do with it. Quite otherwise. But you have made a sound point, for Zadoroff is stronger than I am; he could knock me down with one blow. And he isn't afraid of me, nor is Burun or any of the others. But in all this they don't think of the blows; all they think of is the anger, the human explosion. They know perfectly well that I needn't hit them; that I could send Zadoroff back to the magistrates, and that they would make it far hotter for them than anything I could do. But I don't do that; I am taking the dangerous way as far as I am concerned, the human, not the official way. And in some curious manner the colony seems to be necessary to them. It's all very complicated. Above all they realize that we work very hard for them. They are human beings after all, the same as we are. That's the important thing. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

As has already been pointed out, this "punch on the jaw" became a tradition in the colony, and Makarenko never had occasion to lay a finger on any of his pupils again. These two

<sup>1</sup>*Poem*, p. 16.



facts taken together reveal the whole secret of punishment, particularly corporal punishment. It became a tradition simply because it never happened again. If it had, there would have been no tradition, physical punishment would have become a routine, sheer habit both for teachers and pupils, as it so easily does. On the other hand, the strength of the tradition made its repetition unnecessary. But as Makarenko points out, what the lads remembered was not the blow, but the justifiable anger behind it, and although they always referred to it afterwards as "the punch on the jaw", this was because their language and mode of thought were incapable of expressing the emotional content, but seized on the external evidence of that emotion. In spite of this, however, they realized quite well that it was the emotion that mattered, and in future all that was necessary was to show, or at any rate give signs of being capable of, justifiable anger.

Makarenko's further analysis of this incident is a typical example of how his mind worked on this subject. He stresses the point that in some curious manner the colony seemed to be necessary to them; it gave them the status and a modicum of security which they had hitherto lacked, and that they realized that the teachers were doing their best for them under difficulties. In other words, it is not enough to be angry, to insist on orders being obeyed without question; the teacher must have some positive contribution to make; the true response was not to the egotist, but to the altruist in the leader.

The same point comes out in an incident which occurred a few months later. There had been another outbreak of thieving in the colony, and after a lot of fuss and bother the culprit was found to have been Burun, who up to that time had been considered by Makarenko as one of his most promising lads. Owing to the enormity of the offences, and the general indignation of the rest of the colonists, Makarenko summoned him to trial by a People's Court, composed of the pupils themselves, the first public trial in the history of the colony. Makarenko's speech as prosecuting counsel was so effective that there seemed every

possibility that Burun would be lynched forthwith, so he asked to be allowed to speak to the principal alone.

"I walked to the door, afraid that the flood of wild anger which filled me to the brim would suddenly boil right over. The children made way on either hand for Burun and me. We walked in silence across the courtyard through the snowdrifts, I in front and he behind me.

"The whole affair to me was repulsive in the extreme. Burun seemed the absolute dregs of the human rubbish-heap, and I had no idea what I should do with him. He had come into the colony after having been associated with a gang of bandits, the majority of whom, the adults, had been shot. He was seventeen years of age.

"Burun stood silent by the door. I sat at my desk and could hardly keep myself from hitting him with something heavy and thus finishing the interview. At last he slowly raised his head, looked me straight in the eyes, and stressing each word separately and barely keeping himself from sobbing aloud, he said:

" 'I . . . shall . . . never . . . steal . . . anything . . . again.' "

" 'You're lying! You promised that to the magistrates!' "

" 'To the magistrates, yes. But to you . . . it's different. . . . Do what you like with me, but don't send me away.' "

" 'But what's the attraction for you here?' "

" 'I like it here. There's always something to do here. I want to learn. I only stole the things because I like to guzzle.' " <sup>1</sup>

Another aspect of the desire for security, as Dr. Fleming remarks in her discussion of the maladjusted child quoted earlier, is the child's need for affection, for trust and confidence. This also had its influence on Makarenko's conception of discipline, as shown by his handling of Karabanoff in the chapter "Simeon's Punishment". Karabanoff had been expelled after a long series of exploits ranging from marauding expeditions in the villagers' gardens, orchards, and melon-plantations to stand-up fights with local youths. At the same time Makarenko got rid of

<sup>1</sup>*Poem*, p. 33.

Mityagin, who had been another of the ringleaders. A month or so later Simeon Karabanoff returned to the colony alone—Mityagin had left him, it turned out later that he had been arrested with the other members of a gang of bandits and shot—and after making a triumphant tour of the colony (Karabanoff had always been extremely popular with the boys) he found his way back to Makarenko's office. He appeared to be in a rather gloomy frame of mind, his elder brother had recently been killed by Petlura's troops in some street fighting, and it was clear he did not quite know what to do with himself. Suddenly he asked Makarenko to take him back and give him another chance. He was afraid, he said, that Makarenko would not have much faith in him, but that he would do his best to turn over a new leaf. Makarenko agreed to take him back, and as far as trusting him was concerned, he added:

" 'You are exciting yourself for nothing, Simeon. I can trust any man, only some more than others. Some for a few kopecks, some for half a rouble.' "

A few days later he called him into the office and said:

" 'This is how much I trust you. I want you to go to the District Treasurer's office and fetch me 500 roubles.' "

"Simeon gaped and goggled, and said awkwardly:

" 'Five hundred roubles? And what then?' "

" 'Nothing,' I said, looking into the drawer of my writing-table. 'Nothing. You just bring it here to me.' "

" 'Can I take one of the horses?' "

" 'Certainly. And here's a revolver, just in case.' "

"I gave him the identical Browning which I had found in Mityagin's belt a few months before, with the same three rounds in it. It had been lying in my drawer ever since. He looked at the revolver in a rather wild manner, put it hurriedly in his pocket, and without another word left the room. Ten minutes later I heard the sound of hoofs on the pavement, and a horse-man careered furiously past my window.

"Towards evening Simeon entered my office, belted, and

with the smith's short fur coat wrapped round his spruce figure. He silently put the packet of notes and the revolver on my desk.

" 'Did you count it?'

" 'Yes.'

" 'I put the notes in the drawer.'

" 'Thank you for taking so much trouble. Now you'd better go and have some supper.'

" Karabanoff fidgeted with his belt and took one or two paces across the room; it was clear he had something on the tip of his tongue, but he thought better of it, and merely said:

" 'Very well.' "

Makarenko's next commission was for 2,000 roubles. When Simeon returned with the money he was in an almost hysterical condition, but Makarenko calmed him by pointing out that it was the most natural thing in the world for him to have been chosen for such a task; he was by far the best horseman in the colony, young and strong, and easily able to cope with any bandits. Besides, he had the revolver. Simeon left the principal's office singing at the top of his voice:

" 'The eagles are flying

From the mountain peaks. . . . ' " <sup>1</sup>

This same Karabanoff, as previously mentioned, was the Kalabalin who eventually became head of a similar institution himself, after passing through the Rabfak and later the teachers' training college.

In certain cases this feeling of security will not become completely effective at once, but has to be supplemented by active intervention by the teacher in defence of the newcomer. E. O. Reutenberg gives an instance of this in his reminiscences of the Dzerzhinski commune:

" On one occasion his watch was stolen from the drawer of his desk, and the thief was captured. The pupil's father and mother were both living, but he had had a bad upbringing. It should be pointed out that theft was rare in the commune, even

<sup>1</sup> *Poem*, p. 183.

the youngest pupils of Makarenko never or almost never stole anything. But here, at any rate, was a clear case. The thief was captured and it was decided to 'roast' him in front of the Soviet of Commanders. They demanded his immediate expulsion from the commune. Makarenko then made a speech opposing this demand and said that the lad was not a thief at all, that he was not to blame; he had been unlucky, he had been tempted by the watch. But how on earth was he not to blame? He had actually stolen the watch! But Makarenko convinced them, and the lad was allowed to remain in the commune. Afterwards we asked him why he had come to the lad's defence in this way. He replied: 'I forgot my watch in the drawer, and he wanted it, but he's no thief, and we have to convince him that he isn't! If he steals again after this, then we can expel him.' Actually the lad stayed in the colony for five years after that, and nothing like this happened to him again."<sup>1</sup>

As we have already noted, after the incident of the "punch on the jaw" corporal punishment was never used in the colony. This is in line with Soviet law on the subject, which makes it illegal under any circumstances. But this left several very effective methods of punishment open to Makarenko, such as deprivation of holidays or pocket-money or both, demotion from an honourable detachment such as the carpenters or the piggeries to more menial tasks, solitary confinement (used in very rare cases), and after the title of "colonist" was instituted, degradation to the status of "pupil", with consequent loss of various privileges. Actually, as the colony found its feet, it was the Soviet of Commanders which decided the punishment, as we have seen from the above extract from Reutenberg's reminiscences, although Makarenko's advice was usually followed in cases of dispute. In one instance towards the end of Makarenko's time at Kuriakh the Soviet of Commanders, after trying a very bad case of theft, chose the unusual method of boycotting<sup>2</sup> the

<sup>1</sup>E. O. Reutenberg, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup>It is interesting to note that the word "boycott" is used in the Russian.

offender for a certain period. This aroused one of the visiting inspectorate who happened to be present at the trial to a fury of protest, but Makarenko refused to take any steps to reverse this judgment. What he was interested in, as he points out, was not so much the effect of this on the boy, as its effect on the community. To the protests of the inspector he argued that although this was a very strong measure to take, the community had the right to defend itself in any way it chose, even at the cost of one of its members. Her plea for forgiveness, her appeal to the community to "help the offender", was beside the point:

"What these people (educational theorists of this type) suffer from is hypertrophy of the logical faculties. This method is good, and that one is bad, consequently we must always choose the former. How long will it take us to teach them the logic of dialectics? How could I convince them that my work consisted of a more or less prolonged series of operations, sometimes taking up a whole year, all of which take on the character of collisions between the interests of the community and the individuals composing it? How could I show them that during the whole course of my seven years' work in the colony no two incidents had been exactly alike? How could I explain that you cannot allow a community to feel itself helpless and weak, and that in our trial to-day we were teaching a lesson not to Ujhinoff (the offender) nor to the four hundred separate colonists, but to the community itself?"<sup>1</sup>

At first the culprit rather gloried in his enforced isolation, but after a time the novelty of it wore off, and he soon felt the real nature of his punishment. After he had been in Coventry for about a week, one of the visiting inspectors tried to speak to him, but he referred her to his detachment commander for permission, which was refused. He was given the job of keeping the courtyard tidy, and spent an entire evening in the school-room with paper and crayons, and next day a notice was found exhibited in a conspicuous place:

<sup>1</sup>*Poem*, p. 599.

"COLONIST, RESPECT A COMRADE'S LABOUR.

DON'T THROW WASTE PAPER ABOUT ALL OVER THE PLACE.'

After serving out about half his sentence, one of the girls proposed that the remainder should be remitted, on the ground that he had carried his punishment honourably, and had worked well. This was carried unanimously, and he was received back among them like a long-lost brother. Makarenko heaved a sigh of relief; the lesson had been learnt by both the culprit and the community.

As has already been indicated, one of the main reasons for Makarenko's continuous feud with the visiting inspectors from the Ukraine Ministry of Education was this question of discipline. They described his methods as "the education of the barracks" and "commando training" (excuse the anachronistic pur, but that is precisely what they meant when they called it "kommanderskiye vospitania"). What exasperated Makarenko more than anything else was the fuss they made over what he regarded as side-issues: the bugle calls, the drill, the daily reports, and the saluting. His conception of discipline was concerned with the general tone of the establishment; he is constantly using this word tone, which is not, as far as I know, a native word; the attitude of the pupils to one another and to the staff. From his point of view it did not matter two hoots what signal was used, as long as everybody understood what it meant and obeyed it, and obeyed it willingly. If pressed he would probably have said that he used the bugle calls simply because the kids liked it, and why not?

As far as the question of military drill was concerned, Makarenko was merely a few years ahead of his time, as in so many other things. Since the beginning of the war, and in some districts even before the Germans attacked Russia, every school has at least one military instructor, or "vovenruk", as they are called, on its staff, and drill is taken as part of physical training from the junior schools upwards. But Makarenko himself

took the unusual but highly characteristic view that drill was a form of aesthetic training. (Anybody who has ever experienced the thrill of watching a company of Guards or Royal Marines march past will realize what he meant by this.)

"I particularly value the traditions of drill. . . . But at the same time I must warn you that this does not mean the mere repetition of the methods of an army platoon. In no case must it be simple copying. But there are many excellent things in army life, and many particularly fine, attractive features in the ways of the Red Army, and I have become more and more convinced of the value of army drill. . . . This tradition of drill brightens up the community and gives it an external shell within which it is possible to live handsomely. Drill is an aesthetic . . ."

At the same time he warned his readers against carrying this to excess. "I have always been opposed to the practice of some young teachers who insist on their children marching everywhere: marching in and out of the dining-room, marching to and from work, marching, always marching. This is ugly and unnecessary."

As will be seen from the above, by "drill" Makarenko meant not merely the ordered marching and counter-marching of ranks and files, but the whole atmosphere of army life; the cleanness and neatness of equipment and clothing,<sup>1</sup> the firm carriage and movement of the body; the alertness and smartness of the well-trained soldier. The practical value of this aesthetic view of drill is shown in an incident which occurred a few months after he took over the direction of the Dzerzhinski commune. One day he was asked to meet a group of about fifteen bisprizornie who had just been arrested by the authorities after a search of one of the trains passing through Kharkov. A selected group of colonists met them with a parade in the square outside the

<sup>1</sup>When Makarenko first visited the Kuriaj home he was particularly distressed by the threadbare clothing of the thirty or so girls there. He remarked: "Wearing rags and tatters like this would give them an inferiority complex for the rest of their lives." One of the first things they did when they took over was to organize what he called "a feminine bacchanale", an orgy of sewing and fitting the new uniforms.



station. The "new boys" were placed at the head of the column and made to march back to the commune in front of the serried ranks of well-dressed, smart, and sturdy colonists.

"If you ponder deeply over the march of these ragged waifs and strays through the whole town between the ordered ranks of the Dzerzhinski children, you will realize that by the time they arrived in the grounds of the commune the bisprizornie will have experienced a psychological crisis which left no room for boasting or impudence, or aggressive attitudes in relation either to the commune itself or to the leader. To arouse the feelings of timidity and embarrassment in the breasts of waifs and strays but lately taken from the wagon roofs is no light matter.

"They were left near the bath-house, which had been well stoked up in preparation for the visitors. The affair happened in summer, so they were ordered to strip there and then in the courtyard, and throw their filthy clothes into a common heap.

"Safe at home, after a bath and haircut and wearing their new uniforms, shaken to the very depths of their young being by the general attention and the attraction of consistent discipline, the newcomers had to undergo yet another shock. On the asphalt yard between the flower beds their 'travelling attire' was piled into a heap, drenched with paraffin, and turned into a raging bonfire. Finally Misha Gostar came up with his birch broom and bucket and swept the greasy embers away, winking at the nearest 'new boy':

" 'There's your autobiography gone up in smoke!'

"This burning of the bisprizornies' clothes—the ceremonial bonfire—was for them a symbol; their old life had gone for good and all."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A. S. Makarenko, *Flags on the Battlements*, quoted in Medynski.

## CHAPTER X

### THE "SENSE OF THE MEAN"

ANOTHER matter which in Makarenko's view was closely allied to that of discipline was the question of the authority of the teacher or parent over the child, or in more general terms, their normal attitude to one another. In Russian educational circles at that time it was fashionable to demand complete freedom for the child; children were to be treated with kindness and even reverence, and nothing was to be allowed to interfere with their spontaneous and natural development. This idea was based originally on the teachings of Rousseau, but its popularity in Russia was largely due, as Makarenko points out, to a misunderstanding of two words which were frequently met with in the writings of Lenin: "conscious discipline". In discussing this point, incidentally the only time he mentions the name of Lenin in his *Poem*, Makarenko said: "To any ordinary sensible man, this means that discipline must be accompanied by the realization of its necessity, its utility, its class significance. In educational theory, however, a totally different construction was placed on it; discipline was understood to develop not from social experience, from the practical comradeship of communal activities, but out of pure consciousness, bare intellectual conviction, and abstract ideas. The theorists then go further and affirm that this 'conscious discipline' is unacceptable if it develops as a result of outside interference. What is needed, then, according to them, is not 'conscious discipline', but 'self-discipline'. In the same way any organization of the children's life by others is unnecessary and bad; the only admissible type of organization is 'self-organization'." We can see now that all this rigmarole against which Makarenko was struggling was part of the backwash of the revolution. So

many old traditions had been swept away that it would have been remarkable if there had not been an attempt to make a clean sweep in education as well. But to Makarenko this looked very much like throwing the baby out with the bath water.

In opposition to this idea of "reverence" the phrase he was constantly using in this connection was "trebovatelnaya liuboff", which may be rendered very roughly as "exacting affection". The word "trebovania" from which the adjective is derived means a demand, a claim, or a request. The idea was a dual one; affection must be tempered by clear and explicit standards; kindness of itself was not enough, it must be accompanied by definite demands. As we have seen, he was no sentimentalist, and although he must have liked children the most he ever allowed himself in expressing his affection was a barely noticeable pat on the back or a slight ruffling of the child's hair. In their turn the children were always very guarded in the expression of their affection towards him:

"I lived with them for eight years, and many of them regarded me with affection, but not once in all those years were they tender with me in the accepted sense of the word. I learned to recognize their feelings by signs known only to myself: by a rapid glance, by a blush of embarrassment, by a steady attention from a distant corner, by an almost imperceptible tightening of the voice, and by a running and a jumping as they came to meet me."

This idea of "exacting affection" was but one example of a basic principle which runs through the whole of Makarenko's thought, what he called the "sense of the mean". In the jargon, which he never used himself, this is called the dialectical approach, and in spite of Lancelot Hogben's wit<sup>1</sup> there is more in it than meets the eye. The orthodox exposition is given in full by Professor Medynski: "Makarenko, according to the laws of dialectical materialism, sought and found the resolutions of the

<sup>1</sup>*Mathematics for the Million.*

contradictions between the individual and society, freedom and necessity, rights and the law, the authority and power of the teacher and the effective self-government of the community of pupils, severity and affection, not by opposing them to one another, but by revealing their essential unity." But as I said, Makarenko preferred to call it the "sense of the mean".

He devoted the major part of one of his lectures to parents, delivered in Moscow in July, 1938, to this topic. He opened his talk in characteristic fashion with a description of some of the parents who, after the publication of his study of family education entitled *The Parents' Book*, brought their domestic troubles to him. A mother and father came to him:

" 'We are both members of the Party and civil servants; I am an engineer and my wife is a teacher, and we had a fine son, but lately we just can't do anything with him. He cheeks his mother, stays away from home, and sells our things. What can we do? We brought him up carefully, looked after him properly, he has his own separate room, and has always had all the toys he wanted, and good clothes and boots. And now—he is fifteen years old—he is always wanting to go to the theatre or the cinema, or he wants a bicycle—yes, a bicycle, of all things! And look at us; quite normal people, he couldn't have inherited anything from us. Why should we have such a bad son?'

" 'Do you make his bed after him?' I asked the mother.

" 'Always.'

" 'It never entered your head that he could make his own bed, I suppose?' Then I asked the father a question:

" 'And you clean his boots for him?'

" 'I do.'

"I said to these parents:

" 'I wish you good day. And don't come to see me again, or anybody else, but just walk down the boulevard and find a nice quiet seat and try to think whose fault it was that your son has turned out like this.'

"Actually, if the father cleans his son's boots every morning

of his life, and his mother makes his bed, what sort of a child could you expect?"<sup>1</sup>

This was an exposition, in very homely language, of the practical application of his idea of "exacting affection". He admitted that it was quite natural for parents to spoil their children in this way, by letting their affection run away with them, but pointed out that it was unfair to blame the child for the consequences, and that parental love, like quinine and other strong medicines, is most effective when administered regularly, in small doses. In other words, every teacher, every parent, and every guardian must find some mean path, the average, between the extremes of blind affection and severe oppression.

The essential point is that the true relation between the parent or teacher and the child is a mutual, or rather, reciprocal one. If the child is the habitual recipient of unlimited affection, free, gratis, and for nothing, without any corresponding obligation on his part, he values it accordingly, that is, he values it not at all. This surprises the parents or teachers, and he is usually set down as an ungrateful little beast, but the attitude is quite natural. All children, at least after the nursery stage, have a very clear and definite sense of values, including the value of their own personality as a fellow human being. It is not so much that a child must *earn* or deserve affection by doing some domestic chore or other; it is simply a mutual exchange of rights, and we must give the child the credit for seeing it in its true light.

The accuracy of the average child's sense of values, another aspect of this reciprocal relation between pupil and teacher, is brought out very sharply by Makarenko's thumbnail sketch of Sherry, the agronom, to my mind one of the clearest pieces of insight in the whole of his *Poem of Education*:

"It was clear to all of us that Edvard Nicolayevitch Sherry had been raised from a very particular kind of seed which had been nourished, not by our soft Russian rain, but by some kind

<sup>1</sup>Shorthand notes of lecture by A. S. Makarenko. *Uchitel'skaya Gazeta (Teachers' Journal)*, 29th November, 1944.

of German<sup>1</sup> synthetic fertilizer specially invented for such Sherrys. . . .

"His new methods of agricultural organization extended over the entire colony; the fields, the stables, the pigsties, the road to and from the town, even to the dining-rooms and my office. His decisions were not always accepted by the children without protest, but he would always listen to their practical suggestions with the utmost politeness, argue for a while with them in the briefest possible terms, and finally say:

" 'Do it exactly as I tell you.' "

"The colonists regarded him with amazement. . . . Their wonder was expressed by their silent acceptance of his authority and by endless debates about his words, his ways, his apparent lack of ordinary human emotions and his remarkable knowledge.

"I was not surprised at this. I already knew that children were not invariably influenced by the purely intellectual conviction that their esteem should be kept for those who showed them affection and kindness. I had long been convinced that the greatest degree of affection and respect on the part of children, especially the sort of children we had in the colony, was shown towards another type of person altogether. What are called high qualifications, confident and precise knowledge, understanding, skill, 'golden hands',<sup>2</sup> spareness of words and complete abstention from pi-jaw, and a continual readiness for work—these are the qualities which attract children in the highest degree.

"You can be as dry as you like with them, severe to the point of captiousness, you can give the impression of being completely indifferent to their sympathy, you can ignore them even if they are under your very nose; but if your work is good, your knowledge ready and accessible, you can set your mind at rest;

<sup>1</sup>The word "German" is often used in Russian as we use the word "Scot", in the sense of careful, cautious, methodical.

<sup>2</sup>Zolotie ruki—"golden" hands, a common Russian expression to denote skill at any kind of handicraft. One of the finest compliments one can pay to a Russian woman is to tell her she has "golden hands". Cf. our "green fingers".

they are all for you, and will never let you down. It does not matter how your skill may show itself, it does not matter in the least what you are, whether joiner, agronom, blacksmith, teacher, or lorry-driver.

"On the other hand, however kind you may be, however much you may like to chat with them, however sympathetic you may be either in work or play; if all your work results in failure or disaster, if every step you take shows that you do not know your own business, if everything you do turns out to be rubbish or 'junk', you will never get anything out of them except contempt, sometimes ironical and condescending, sometimes angry and resentful, sometimes capricious and importunate."<sup>1</sup>

To sum the matter up in as few words as possible, in this question of the authority of the teacher over the pupil Makarenko felt that the true relation between them rested on two main factors: the teacher's appreciation of the child's individuality, and the child's recognition, often a very precise recognition, of the teacher's ability and "know-how". In the extreme case, when the teacher or parent has no sense whatever of the child's personality, he is either pampered or repressed, or in other words, treated as a god or as a slave. The average normal child is neither, he is just another human being, and although his experience may be a good deal narrower, his instincts are perhaps all the keener for that. It is only when the teacher knows his own business, and is therefore certain of the child's respect and confidence, and in consequence honours the child's personality by demanding the utmost from him, that he can adopt this attitude of "exacting affection", thus taking the mean path between the extremes of indulgence and repression.

It will be seen from this that Makarenko's conception of discipline from the point of view of the authority of the teacher

<sup>1</sup>Anton Chekhov, writing of the devotion of Tolstoy's daughters Mary and Tania to their father, remarked: "Daughters are like sparrows—they can't be deceived with chaff." (Derrick Leon, *Tolstoy, His Life and Work*, Routledge.) Put "children" for "daughters", and you have Makarenko's point.

or parent was not so much concerned with the question of keeping order as of making a positive contribution to the development of knowledge and character. Discipline was the end, not just the means of education. Its function was not to regulate behaviour, but to mobilize it for the accomplishment of social achievements. The view that discipline was merely a means to an end—in Russia this conception is usually traced to German influence—was, he felt, an over-simplification of the part it plays in the educational process. It was equally wrong, he felt, to believe that it was only necessary to prepare a sufficiently large number of “activities” for the problem of discipline to solve itself. A child will attack almost any fresh task, no matter how difficult or laborious, with enthusiasm, but as soon as the novelty of the thing wears off, a point which most children soon reach, there has to be some more obvious purpose behind the activity to keep his attention. And this incentive must be supplied by the teacher. Children vary so much that the incentive must be different in almost every case, and this is where the teacher’s capacity to “orientate” himself, as Makarenko puts it, i.e. to find the right method for each particular boy, will be fully extended. Some children, however, seem to resist almost any normal incentive. Makarenko says in one passage:

“A good deal of the attention paid to the training of character is wrongly directed, to my mind. It is usually concentrated on the unruly element. This, of course is, highly necessary, but it by no means exhausts the problem; the timid and modest, the gentle-Jesuses,<sup>1</sup> the column dodgers, the wasters, the idlers and the dreamers usually evade its influence. Yet these characteristics are, in fact, as harmful as any.”

Many parents and teachers are only too glad to have a child of this type to deal with. “He’s always such a good boy” they say, “never gives any trouble.” Fortunately not all parents are of the same mind. I was recently discussing one of my own

<sup>1</sup>“Yesusiki” in the original. This word is not in any dictionary that I have had access to, but the meaning is fairly clear from the context.



pupils with a parent, who happened to be a man against whom I had played many keen games of cricket before the boy was born. I mentioned casually that he was a good lad, and the father replied: "He's too good. I wish he'd come home one day with his shirt torn off his back and a couple of black eyes."

This is yet another example of Makarenko's "sense of the mean". As Professor Medynski says in quoting this passage:

"... It is not the quiet, passive child, who is never seen or heard of in school, and never does anything notable or creative when he leaves, that is the ideal; but the active, resolute, well-disciplined member of the community, the true representative of the 'young guard', keen, intelligent, and capable."

All this makes enormous demands upon the teacher's power of "orientation", and calls for the utmost tact and finesse of which he is capable. As a teacher himself, Makarenko showed these qualities to the highest possible degree, it enabled him to make a masterly use of military drill without arousing the suspicion of being a martinet, and apply the most exacting standards to the children's work and behaviour and at the same time show a profound affection for them. He was always talking about a teacher's "style":

"There is no style in the work of a teacher who, having no principles at all or unable to bring those he has into practical application, oscillates violently from one extreme to another, from the so-called 'theory of free discipline' to a belief in rigorous authority, from severity to sickly-sweet pampering. Educational theory always ignores this matter of style and tone, yet this is perhaps one of the most essential and valuable aspects of communal education. In the creation of style the chief part is played by the accumulation of tradition."

The qualities which Makarenko looked for in his own teachers, the "real people" he had such difficulty in finding, are shown by his comments on them in his *Poem of Education*. We have already seen his estimate of Sherry, the agronom, whose main attraction for Makarenko was his skill and knowledge. His description

of another member of the staff at Trepke brings out another point, and is in some ways a piece of unconscious self-portrayal:

"I obtained Pavl Ivannitch Jhurbin from the local branch of the Union of Teachers in the capacity of chief assistant. He was a very well-educated man, kind and reserved in the English manner, a real Stoic and 'gentleman'.<sup>1</sup> He had one particular quality which attracted me; he had a gourmet's pure delight in human nature for its own sake; he would talk with the passion of a collector about the varying features of human character, the unpredictable quirks and flourishes of personality, the gallantry of heroism and the dark secrets of human weakness."

When later at Kuriajh there was a considerable extension of club activities, Makarenko was able to get hold of the very man for the job:

"About this time Vassily Nicolayevitch Perski made his appearance in the colony—a most remarkable personality. He was a veritable Don Quixote, and at the same time revealed an extraordinary flair for the traditional crafts, literature, and the fine arts. His leanness of face and figure came straight out of the pages of Cervantes. He lived entirely for his fantasies and inventions, and I never had the heart to complain that his world was not inhabited by creatures of good and evil. But I strongly advise anyone who may be looking for someone to lead club activities to choose a Don Quixote like Perski. They know the value of every chip and shaving; make puppets out of cardboard and a few paints; get the lads to produce wall-newspapers forty yards long, and make model aeroplanes which can be recognized as bombers or reconnaissance aircraft. A Don Quixote like this can give you all the burning passion, all the talent and creative skill, that club activities need. I shall not attempt to describe all Perski's exploits, it is enough to say that he rejuvenated our evening classes, filled the colony with shavings and nails and the smell of glue, the whine of saws,

<sup>1</sup>The word "gentleman" is used in the Russian.

the hum of propellers, and the murmur of his choral-speaking groups and pantomimes."

It is curious that in speaking of these three men he should stress the German qualities of Sherry, Jhurbin's English reserve, and compare Perski to a Spaniard. But it is clear what he was after; outstanding ability in one direction or another and above all enthusiasm. Makarenko would have been in complete agreement with the dictum of Jacques Barzun in his brilliant book *We Who Teach*: "It is extraordinary how many diverse kinds of men and women make desirable teachers. . . . You can take the halt, the lame, and the blind; men with speech defects or men who cannot be heard above a whisper; gross and repulsive men like my blessed mathematics teacher; men who are lazy and slow; who are bright and unstable . . . and join them to form an admirable as well as an induplicable faculty. This is possible because the students also display a variety of human traits and cannot all be reached and moved by the same spells."

Makarenko was even prepared to tolerate a crank, as long as his particular obsession did not interfere with his value as a teacher. Late one autumn a young man who had been recommended to him as an art specialist joined the staff at Trepke. A few days later Makarenko heard on the colony grapevine that every morning he was in the habit of bathing in the river, which, of course, was at this time of the year beginning to freeze over. Nothing daunted by this, the young man bribed one of the farm servants to cut a hole in the ice, and continued his morning dip. It was not surprising that for the next week or so he spent the best part of his time in bed with feverish colds, but as soon as he recovered he resumed his fantastic ordeal. When Makarenko remonstrated with him he replied that he had accepted the post because of the nearness of the river to the colony, and that there was nothing in the code of working conditions which stipulated that he should not swim if he wanted to do so, as for his illnesses, he had always been rather a weakling, and he wanted to harden his constitution. For him it was a case of kill or cure. Fortun-

ately his bouts of bronchitis and pleurisy became shorter and less frequent, and in the intervals he was able to do some excellent work in the art club, the theatre, and the Komsomol. Another addition to the staff in the early days at Gorki was of an altogether different kidney. A fanatical Ukrainian nationalist, he spent most of his time teaching the children folk-songs—which most of them knew better than he did—and spouting Schevchenko's verse. Makarenko stood it as long as he could, but eventually sent him packing.

Here again we see Makarenko's fundamentally realist attitude to human nature. Both teachers and pupils are individuals, and must be treated as such, with full allowances for nurture, environment, and personality. He was strongly opposed to any kind of pattern or machine-made ideal; the problems of each separate child must be approached in a creative spirit. His main argument in favour of his "education in the community" was that only in such a community can the individual obtain full security and find and pursue his own bent.

Bearing all this in mind, it is hardly surprising that Makarenko was inclined to turn a rather lack-lustre eye on a good deal of what passes for "scientific" assessment of ability and intelligence. In the early days at Poltava he was asked to take charge of a couple of young female pupil teachers and give them the run of the institution for a while before they entered the training college. At their first interview one of these young ladies asked him whether he ran a "pedagogical clinic" (the Russian expression for a room set apart for psychological study of the children). Makarenko was afraid he did not.

"Then how can you study personality?"

"Study personality?" I asked, as seriously as I could muster.

"Yes, the personality of your children.

"What do you want to study that for?"

"What for? But how do you do your work? How can you work on them, if you know nothing about them? What are your pupils' dominant features?"

"The other girl interrupted her friend: 'If they don't study the personality of the children here, then it is superfluous to talk about dominant features,' she suggested.

" 'Why not?' I said seriously. 'I could tell you one or two things about dominant features. They have very much the same as you have. . . .'

" 'But how can you know anything about us?'

" 'Well, here you are sitting down opposite me and talking.'

" 'But . . .'

" 'Yes, I can see right through you. You sit here like pieces of glass, and I can tell you everything that goes on inside you.'

On one occasion a visitor to the Dzerzhinski commune expressed her admiration of the work done there, but asked in some surprise: "But why is there no psychologist here?" Makarenko replied shortly: "We don't allow organ-grinders and jugglers in the commune."<sup>1</sup> No doubt he relied very much on insight and intuition, but he is surely correct in assuming that any teacher worth his salt, studying his children day by day in their work, their play, their behaviour at table and in the dormitory, should be able to assess the child's character and capabilities at least as well as most "intelligence tests". Recent work on this subject, summarized in *The Social Psychology of Education* by Professor Fleming, seems to support this view. In any case, the point that Makarenko was continually stressing was the infinite variety of personality, and the almost unlimited potentialities of human nature.

All this may seem very strange to us, accustomed as we are to think of the Socialist or Communist state as an ant-heap of soulless robots, all alike in their blind obedience to authority and in the violent extremism of their political views. Yet when we reflect upon it, the very essence of the Marxian dialectic is its

<sup>1</sup>This is the official view at the moment. "Intelligence tests" and the activities of the "pedalogues" were abolished by Party decree on 4th July, 1936. There was an article in a recent number of *Sov. Ped.* devoted to the tenth anniversary of this directive.

search for the mean, the reconciliation of opposites, not by a confused blurring of qualities, but by full recognition of their true value and relevance to the whole.

Makarenko summed it up in the final passages of the lecture to parents quoted above:

"I have told you to-night that I consider this to be the most important aim in our educational work, the sense of the mean, both in affection and in severity, in tenderness and harshness, and even in our processes of law and in our games, our attitude to property and household affairs. That is the main principle on which I take my stand.

"I emphasize yet again that only according to that principle is it possible to educate human beings, capable of great endurance, and capable too of high endeavour, because only in this way can we truly develop the will."

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## CHAPTER XI

### ARTS AND CRAFTS

IN further pursuit of his "search for the mean", Makarenko made a conscious effort to strike a balance between the workaday activities of the school, farm, and workshops and the things of the mind. As can be seen from his own writings, he was a widely read and deeply cultured man, and tried to develop similar tastes in his pupils. His first experiments in this direction were his reading parties in the early days of the Gorki colony, which eventually resulted in the adoption of his beloved author's name by the pupils and the outside public. But in this matter he was clearly working under great difficulties, and confesses that the press of practical affairs and his constant obsession with bread-and-butter matters often forced him to give less attention to this side of teaching than he liked. In the epilogue to the *Poem of Education* he says:

"I was often asked by comrades making flying visits to the colony:

" 'Tell me, they say that many of your bisprizornie here show signs of possessing creative gifts, but have you ever come across any writers or artists among them?'

"Of course there must have been a few writers and artists among our children; how otherwise could you have such things as wall-newspapers, for example. But it must be acknowledged with regret that none of the Gorki lads ever did, in fact, become writers or artists, not because they lacked ability, but for quite other reasons; they had quite enough to do to look after the practical side of life. . . ."

But besides the wall-newspaper, there was a wide selection of artistic and recreational activities both in the Gorki colony and in the Dzerzhinski commune. He devotes a whole chapter of

the second part of his *Poem* to an interesting and highly diverting account of the theatrical productions which he started at Trepke, with the main intention of improving the children's diction and incidentally broadening their social contacts with the villagers and the outside world generally. They produced plays both in the Russian and in the native Ukrainian, and tried not to go too far over the heads of their audiences, composed for the most part of barely literate villagers, although they included in their repertory several classics, including Gogol's *Revizor* (The Inspector), and Gorki's *In the Depths*. As part of the festivities at the wedding of Olga Voronova and Pavl Pavlovitch Nicolaenko they gave a performance of Gogol's *Marriage*. Later on at the Dzerzhinski commune the dramatic club, as was seen from the extract from E. O. Reutenberg's reminiscences, was closely linked to the Kharkov theatres and opera, and benefited by visits and lectures by the actors and producers of the State Theatre of Dramatic Art.

Club activities were also strongly represented, both the "quiet" and the "noisy" varieties; indeed one wonders whether the children, or the teachers, for that matter, had any time to themselves at all. But some youngsters, as youngsters will, managed to strike out a line of their own. Makarenko describes one such lad in his chapter entitled "Dominant Features". Speaking of the winter evenings at Trepke, he says:

"There were one or two guests in my modest quarters too. At this time I had my mother staying with us. She was already getting on in years, and all the colonists called her 'grannie'. With grannie was Shurka Jheveli, younger brother to Mitka Jheveli, and even smaller than Mitka. Shurka had a frightfully thin, sharp nose. He had been with us for a long time, but never seemed to grow at all, he just seemed to get sharper in all directions, sharper in the ears, sharper in the chin, and not less sharp in intelligence either.

"Shurka was always carrying on some kind of spare-time hobby. In a lonely corner of the orchard he put up a boarded



fence, in which he kept a pair of rabbits, and in the stokehold he sometimes kept a young crow. The Komsomol often accused him of speculation and hinted that some of his activities were diversionist in character, but Shurka defended himself stoutly and replied:

"Can you produce anybody I have sold anything to? Have you seen me selling anything?"

"But where do you get all your money from?"

"What money?"

"The money you bought the sweets with yesterday."

"That? Why, grannie gave me ten kopecks."

"That was enough for the Komsomol. Nobody had the heart to bring grannie into question in an open meeting."

"There were always one or two youngsters surrounding grannie. Every now and again they would run little errands for her in Goncharovka, but as a rule they took great care to conceal this from me. And when it was known that I was busy and not likely to be back for some time, grannie would have two or three of them sitting at her table drinking tea or liquidating some delicacy which she had prepared for me, but which I had not had the time to eat. Owing to her failing memory, grannie rarely knew the names of all her little friends, but Shurka stood out from among them all, chiefly because he was an old hand and the most lively and talkative of them all."

"On this occasion Shurka visited grannie for a special and definite reason."

"How do you do?"

"Hello, Shurka! How is it I haven't seen anything of you for such a long time? Have you been ill or something?"

"Shurka sits himself down on the stool and taps the peak of his cap, which had once been white, on the edge of the table. His recently clipped head of white hair gleams in the light of the oil lamp. He sniffs and looks up at the low ceiling."

"No, I haven't been ill. But my rabbit's not very well."

"Poor little chap! What are you going to do with him?"

"'You can't do anything,' says Shurka, keeping the excitement out of his voice with some difficulty.

"'But can't you give it something to make it better?'

"'I haven't got any medicine to make it better.'

"'What sort of medicine do you want?'

"'If I could get hold of some oatmeal . . . about half a cup of oatmeal . . . I could do something.'

"'Shurka, would you like some tea?' asks grannie. 'Look, the teapot's on the hob and there's the glasses. Pour me out one as well.'

"Shurka puts his cap on the stool and reaches carefully over to the hob, while grannie, standing on her tiptoes, takes the red bag in which she keeps her little store of oatmeal down from the top shelf."

Makarenko was very proud of his brass band:

"We were the first colony in the Ukraine, and possibly the first in the whole of the Soviet Union, to have this wonderful thing. . . . It was true that in the colony it was a sore trial to the nerves; for months on end there was not a single quiet corner in the whole establishment; they would be sitting everywhere, on the chairs, the tables, the window-sills, and the hideous cacophony of cornets, trombones and basses all playing different parts in different times nearly drove us out of our minds. But on May Day we marched into the town behind our own brass band. . . ."

The May Day celebrations and the holiday on the anniversary of the October revolution were always marked by a parade in Kharkov, where they made a brave show in their neat uniforms of two shades of blue, with white collars. According to Lucy L. Wilson the purpose of this parade was to attract recruits to the colony, and no doubt some bisprizornie, of whom there were still large numbers even as late as the thirties, were attracted by their bearing and their obvious appearance of being well looked after. There is nothing particularly remarkable about there being so many children without homes. As many observers

have pointed out, one of the characteristics of Soviet industrial enterprise was the high labour turnover. It was not only the children who were, as Makarenko shows in his account of the Kuriakh bisprizonic, wandering all over the Union to find jobs; the parents too were continually moving from one plant to another in the effort to find a place that suited them. An additional factor was the presence of a certain amount of labour direction. In this process a good many children would naturally be, in a manner of speaking, lost in transit. In any case, in an expanding economy such as this, home ties would not be as strong as they are in a more settled community such as England or pre-war France. But it is highly probable that in these parades the recruitment of fresh colonists was a side-issue; in the ordinary way the police kept them supplied with as many as they could handle; these parades were just outings, and the children enjoyed them as much as anybody; in fact there is nothing children from eleven to sixteen or so enjoy more.

Makarenko met with a good deal of criticism on account of these parades. It was his practice to march his column straight through the centre of Kharkov—a city larger than Bristol—completely ignoring the traffic. When he took the lads to camp at Sochi they did the same thing there, and he was very amused when one of the prefects who was marching by his side turned to him and said through the din of klaxons and the angry shouts of the lorry-drivers:

“We stopped the trams at Kharkov; why should we bother about these provincials?”

All this was a conscious effort on Makarenko's part to foster in his pupils a feeling of loyalty for their community, as an institution having its own place, and an important place at that, in the general scheme of things. This was also the real reason for calling it the Gorki colony or Dzerzhinski commune, apart from the reflected prestige of these two revolutionary leaders.

There is, of course, always a certain amount of risk attached to this. This loyalty must not become so strong that it prevents

the child from transferring his enthusiasm to other and wider loyalties later in life. Some children seem unable to do this. Old Boys' and Old Girls' societies are full of cases of retarded development of this type. I have often noticed myself that the type of boy who re-visits the school some years after leaving is rarely those we remember as our best boys, but usually the not-too-good or not-too-bad, if anything below the average. We never seem to set eyes on those whom we should most like to meet. This used to puzzle me at one time, but the reason is fairly clear. To the mediocre or below-average boys, a state of affairs usually ascribable to home or environmental influence, school is the first real loyalty they experience, and since their mediocrity rarely gets them a better job than monotonous factory or errand-boy work, they never get much chance to transfer their enthusiasm to their new surroundings. School for them was, and remains, their "finest hour". To the better type of lad, on the other hand, school was never more than an incident, and when they leave they naturally find plenty of scope for new loyalties both in their work and their leisure activities. There is evidence that Makarenko had some difficulties of this kind, but it seems that the socialist character of the régime itself helps a good deal in this regard.

Makarenko also made a good deal of the annual ceremony of "Reaping the First Sheaf". He describes one of these festivals in great detail towards the end of the third part of his *Poem*; this was the first year of their "conquest of Kuriajh", and the holiday was celebrated with particular emphasis.

The festival itself was arranged to take place on 5th July, and in preparation for it a good deal of general clearing up took place—incidentally, one of the most valuable features of this kind of "occasion" from a practical point of view. The dormitories had been redecorated and refurnished, and a new change of bedding issued; the pond in the grounds of the monastery had been cleaned out for the first time in many decades; and they had set out new terraces and flowers beds on

the hill overlooking the main courtyard. The colony itself was decorated with garlands and mottoes, and three days before the festival the 13th combined detachment sent out the invitations. On the day itself about half an acre of rye was marked out for reaping by means of red flags, and the road leading to the field was also hung with banners and garlands. At the entrance gateway the reception committee met the visitors and issued them with tickets inviting them to have dinner later with one or other of the regular detachments. Places were laid in the open air for about six hundred. Among the guests were representatives of the Kharkov factory committees, the District Executive Committee<sup>1</sup> and the Ministry of Education, the local village Soviets, newspaper reporters, Party bigwigs, and other friends.

Punctually at twelve noon the bugle call for "General Assembly" was sounded, and all the colonists formed up in lines in the main courtyard. Makarenko made a short speech, ending with the words:

"And now we honour one of our best comrades, Burun, the commander of the 8th combined detachment, by asking him to reap the first sheaf for us."

At this point the 8th combined detachment, consisting of sixteen lads, with Burun at their head, marched out from the farmyard with their flower-decked reaping-hooks and rakes over their shoulders. Behind them came the sixteen girls who were to bind the sheaves, each with a garland of flowers in her hair. Following the girls came the two reaping-machines, drawn by two pairs of horses each, then the water cart, and finally a horse-drawn ambulance, flying the Red Cross, with two girls as nurses, "for anything might happen at work". All these vehicles were decorated to the taste of their drivers, with flowers in the horses' manes, and even the spokes of the water-cart wheels were wreathed with garlands.

A short ceremony then followed, consisting of set speeches

<sup>1</sup>Roughly equivalent to our city or county council.

laid down by the Soviet of Commanders and repeated every year, in which the command of the entire colony was transferred *pro tem* to Burun, and the procession moved off to the field where the harvesting was to take place. On arrival at the field the sixteen lads arranged themselves in a line along one side—their task was to cut a path for the machines to start reaping—while Burun went up to the red flag which marked the place where the first sheaf of rye was to be cut, followed by Natasha, one of the senior girls, whose duty it was to bind the sheaf, and Zoren, as the youngest child in the colony, to receive it from them on behalf of them all.

“‘Attention!’

“Burun began to reap. With a few sweeping strokes of his scythe he laid a bundle of tall rye at Natasha’s feet. She had already prepared the binding from the first swathe, and taking the rye, she bound the sheaf with two or three rapid, skilful movements, two other girls placed a garland of flowers on the top, and Natasha, flushed with her efforts, handed the sheaf to Burun. Lifting it on his shoulders, he said to little snub-nosed Zoren, lifting her little nose even higher to catch what he said:

“‘Take this sheaf from my hands, work hard and study, so that when you grow up, you will become a member of the Komsomol, and have the honour, which has this day fallen to me, of reaping the first sheaf.’

“Clear and shrill, like a lark over the pastures, Zoren answered Burun:

“‘Thank you, Gritsko!’<sup>1</sup> I shall study and work hard, and when I grow up I shall join the Komsomol, and it might come to me to have this honour, to reap the first sheaf and hand it to the youngest child in the colony.’

“Zoren took the sheaf from his hands and almost disappeared under it, but two other youngsters ran up immediately with a stretcher, and Zoren laid her precious gift on the flower-decked

<sup>1</sup>Burun’s nickname.

carrier. To the sound of drums and bugles the first sheaf was carried over to the right flank."

After this short ceremony the serious business of clearing the path for the machines commenced, and the reapers themselves began to make a circuit of the field, the horses moving at a trot (one of the results of this particular festival was that the authorities promised the colony a Fordson tractor by next year). After the first two or three circuits of the field the three hundred and fifty children piled in and began to stack the rye, and when it had all been stacked, the whole company stood round the field under the flags and sang the "Internationale" and listened to speeches, "some successful, some unsuccessful, but all sincere; and the people who made them were all quick-witted folks, citizens of a land of workers, moved by the festival and the sight of the children, by the blue sky above them, and the chatter of the grasshoppers."

Returning to the colony the visitors and colonists had dinner together and played games, bathed in the lake, and later the children presented a masque with choral speaking in the main courtyard. The festival ended with home-made fireworks on the edge of the lake, and the guests were finally escorted to their cars and to the local station.

What Makarenko was clearly trying to do here was to adapt the old folk customs to the new way of life. Late one summer evening he was standing in the yard talking to one of the local villagers when a combined detachment which had been doing some threshing in an outlying barn returned to the "White House", marching behind their drums and with banners flying. In the twilight the yokel mistook this for a "khrestniye khot", a religious procession with crosses and ikons, a very common sight in Old Russia. He started to congratulate Makarenko on reviving one of the old customs, but Makarenko pointed out that the lads were carrying red flags instead of ikons, and there were no priests there.

"'I wasn't thinking about the priests,' said the yokel. 'What

I mean is they are celebrating it, making a proper ceremony of it, like people should do. Harvest, you see, is the festival of festivals, but our people seem to have forgotten that.' "

That was Makarenko's point. However hard the work might be, and he never spared either himself, his staff, or his pupils, there was always a time and place for triumph, for celebration, for the final lesson that life should be, and could be, more than mere bread and butter. When Stephen Garry translated the first part of the *Poem of Education* into English, he had an inspiration when he entitled it *The Way to Life*. Makarenko, like all great teachers, took the whole of life as his province, not only the mental and physical, but also the emotional factors which form an essential part of the whole man.

As for the man himself, we have very little information to go on, and he would characteristically have been quite content to let his work speak for itself. As his wife remarked after her visit to Kuriakh in 1927: "Makarenko showed us nothing, remarked on nothing, and explained nothing, as other principals are wont to do. He seemed to take it all as a matter of course. . . ." But there is no doubt he was gifted with considerable insight, humour, self-control, and enthusiasm, and although the political, social, and economic conditions under which he worked were, in spite of their apparent difficulty, demonstrably in his favour, he had the wit and strength of mind to take full advantage of them. Here we may acknowledge perhaps the only possible criticism of an achievement such as his. Men—and women—of his calibre are so rare, and in the nature of things the proportion of those who find themselves drawn to work in the educational field so small, that we may be tempted to dismiss the whole thing as a fluke. If we could only be sure of a Makarenko in one school in every ten, our troubles would be over. As it is, we have to be satisfied in the main with competence, and glad to get even that.

Yet the difference between competence and brilliance such as his—you can call it genius if you like—lies in nothing more



than the acceptance of a basic principle which reveals itself in every aspect of his work: his "education in the community", his "sense of the mean", his "education through work", and last but not least, his "system of perspective lines". This principle may be summed up as the recognition that schooling—the acquisition of facts and skills—is not only not the whole of life, even in childhood and adolescence, but cannot at any time be isolated and dealt with apart from life itself. He realized that although learning is a conscious intellectual process, the motive forces behind it are moral and emotional. In other words learning cannot be separated from incentive, and effective incentives can only be derived from the moral and emotional, that is, in the end, the political and social, environment of the pupil. He saw that the vast changes in the social structure wrought by the revolution, the substitution of a modern industrial Socialist system for a semi-feudal aristocracy, demanded a radical change of emphasis in education. In such a system the only education worthy of the name would be vocational education, in the widest sense of the word vocation.

Since our own social and political system, however slowly and indirectly, is moving in a similar direction, it is time we had the courage to admit that this is also true over here. This is after all the real purpose of the foregoing study. It would be strange indeed if the greatest social and political experiment in modern times, accomplished with the expenditure of so much hard thinking and, unfortunately, at the expense of so much human suffering, had no lessons to offer to the outside world. Not that we must accept without qualification all the Russians say and do; that would be naïve and absurd. Our task is to do the hard thinking, and avoid the suffering, if possible. I think myself it can be done, in fact I believe we are doing it here and now. But we should be very foolish if we failed to take advantage of any help that the Russians in general, and Makarenko in particular, can give us. It is to be hoped that their exasperating attitude of non-co-operation will soon be modified, and that

communications—in both directions—between the U.S.S.R. and the outside world will improve, and it will then be possible to judge the whole of his work in its complete environment. If this preliminary study assists in any way to that end, it will have served its purpose.

